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# SOCIAL ASPECTS.

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# SOCIAL ASPECTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

#### § 1. *On the decay of nations.*

“For the lives, not only of men but of commonwealths, and the whole world, run not upon a helix that still enlargeth, but on a circle, where, arriving to their meridian, they decline in obscurity and fall under the horizon again.”—BROWNE’S *RELIGIO MEDICI*.

AFTER contemplating the History of the World; the one great fact that is almost certain pre-eminently to possess our minds is, if I may so phrase it, the *Perishableness of all Empires*. It would appear that it is with cities and with nations, as with the individual man. They, like him, have a period of ignorant, simple childhood, which in time, by due development, opens into the energy of youth; under the influence of whose earnest and impassioned vigour they are carried headlong to the season of perfect manhood. Then ensues a reign of dignified calmness, of indubitable manliness and sovereignty, in which all the worth that is in them flourishes and blossoms; and after which they gradually wither into their primeval imbecility, never again to reassume their strength and glory.

So universally has this been the history of all

the empires which hitherto have swayed the world, that it is regarded by all historical thinkers as an improbability, bordering very closely upon an impossibility, that there ever will be an empire, here below, which will not, sooner or later, have to succumb to this relentless law, and fall as it arose.

But though all empires have been subject to decay, though all finally have sunk into the abysses of inanity, the *duration* of their power, the longer or shorter postponement of their fall, has fluctuated with the widest uncertainty. No theory of the duration of empires can be deduced from the experience of the past. The domination of the mighty nations of antiquity was prolonged or shortened, as their inherent capacity for maintaining power was more or less active, or as the races round about them were more or less feeble. Thus, therefore, though we are constrained to admit the principle that every empire must eventually yield the sceptre to a younger and more impetuous rival, we can, in return, lay down as an axiom, that it is in the power of the people of a dominant nation to lengthen the period of its supremacy to an extent not calculable by us or them.

It would appear, thence, that the whole end of statesmanship and of politics lies in the prolongation of this national status, or it may be supremacy; and, consequently, that if we can arrive at the true causes of the decay of our predecessors, we shall, by avoiding them, tend to preserve our own progress in the proper path, if not by positively

indicating whither it lies, which is not possible, at any rate by marking where we should not go.

With the intention of tracing out, or, if already traced out, of learning these causes, we turn to history; and we find many guides ready to solve the whole matter for us with glib decisiveness. Persia fell, say such, owing to its being too unwieldy, too extensive; Greece from the republican form of its government, and the absence of a middle class; whence the state was weakened, and its power paralysed by the conflicting jealousies of the aristocracy and the people; Rome by becoming subject to the nominee of an ignorant and capricious soldiery.

Thus run the popular and generally received solutions, and, perhaps, as furnishing a portion of the reason of the fall of those powers, they may be correct. But it requires little advance in historical and general reflection to know that the real cause of anything seldom floats upon the surface; moreover it may be affirmed as a theorem, that no government ever has effected, or ever can originate, or achieve even, the ruin of any nation whatever, not of itself intrinsically tending to decay. We consequently conclude that the above-mentioned were not the actual causes; but that they lie beyond these, not glaringly conspicuous to the hurried gazer, but to be found by patient investigation and laborious thought.

On re-betaking ourselves to history, we find

this idea of the difficulty of discovering a satisfactory reason amply confirmed by our utter incapability to tell the exact point of time when the decline began. Empires have never fallen in one tremendous crash, else would the reason of their fall be easily arrived at; but they have shrivelled and faded imperceptibly away, their decay unnoticed for a long space by surrounding nations, and unfelt by the very people themselves; nay, perhaps even enjoying the prestige of their former influence unabated, and glorying in their pride of power, when in reality the influence, and the power that caused that influence, had ceased to be. When a river bursts its boundaries, it never does so by a sudden rise, but brooklet and rivulet, and innumerable little tributaries, have to be swollen, unnoticed and unknown, far away amid the secret watercourses of the mountains where they rise.

The commencement of the decline must therefore be placed considerably in advance of the perceptible decay, and immeasurably removed from the actual fall. A few months' excesses in youth not unfrequently sow the seeds of a mortal disorder, which is never felt through long years, until it suddenly appears and wrecks the man. The bane is there however, daily growing in its deadly silence; and it is so with nations. The share that the government takes in the ruin is but another necessary pouring in to swell the *dénouement*; the rise and progress of the tragedy were transacted independent of its aid.



The evil of our day is in looking to the state for the interpretation of everything. It is always a wrong system, for the state never can be ultimately anything but a reflex of the nation: the people that is wrecked by an unworthy state has little worthiness in it to merit not being wrecked. The argument which attributes the fall of Greece to its government answers itself; for much the same elements were in that government from its first formation to its end; and if, with such elements pervading its constitution, heroic Greece could raise itself to the proud pinnacle of its glorious isolation of power, it surely cannot be that those elements of themselves caused the overthrow of that power at a later time. If with no monarchy, and the twofold animosities of democracy and aristocracy battling in her very heart, Miltiades could be Miltiades, and Greece repel the countless armaments of Xerxes, why should they at a later period, with still the same two parties, and still no monarchy, and without any changes sufficiently organic to account for it, crumble to pieces before the might of Philip of Macedon, if it were not that the Greeks of Chæronea were not the same Greeks as those of Marathon? Again, the decline of the Roman empire cannot be ascribed to the establishment of an emperor, and his subsequent lapsing into a military puppet. That was itself but a step in the development of the germ of decay, already planted in the Roman people. The real evil was, that they should have so degenerated in character as to be dazzled by

the brilliant glories of Cæsar, and the imperial splendours of Augustus, rather than to venerate and cling to the ancient republican sternness of Cato and of Brutus.

No sooner have we, therefore, rejected the government solution, and turned our attention to the people in their individual non-political relations, than lights flood in upon us, and we gain a somewhat clear insight into the secret of their fall. Much we do not know of the infant Greeks ; but we can well imagine them. Homer stands as their interpreter to all ages ; in his heroic melodies the souls of the men of infant Greece found true utterance. An earnest, young nation, bent upon solving the great problems of existence, gazing upon the heavens and the sea, the mountains, and the level olive-bearing plain, and their own wondrous selves, with a child-like, yet a very manly wonder ; regarding them as so many emanations from those mysterious higher powers before whom they trembled. Men with gods ; not with the names of deities upon their lips, but with an overpowering *belief* of them in their hearts ; a fear and a reverence for them impregnating their minutest thoughts and actions. Theirs were gods you could not doubt. They heard Jupiter in the thunder and Neptune in the roaring ocean ; Aphrodite smiled benignantly upon them in the rosy mouth of every Grecian girl ; and the rich treasures of the earth, the olive, the fig, and the vine, told them unmistakeably of the bounty of Ceres and of Bacchus. Then, their household gods were not mere

wooden images, kept as decent requirements of a decadent faith, but real *bonâ fide* gods to them, in whose sanctity and whose protecting powers men believed, as they believed in life and death. Those early Greeks had everything to bind them to Greece. There were their homes made sacred by the holy *Lares*; there were the temples of the gods, their high defenders; and there the beloved groves and mountains consecrated to particular and local divinities. Their country and their religion were integral portions of their very existence; to tear away their souls from them you must have torn forth their huge religious hearts. They were facts living amid a world of facts. They had something solid in the land to take their stand upon, to love and to fight for. And so, when the Persian came to tear them from that land, to profane with his hostile and irreverent hand the hallowed places of their cities, they arose as earnest, energetic, simple-living men alone can do, hurled back the invading myriads, secured a noble safety of existence, and won for their name and country an imperishable renown.

Danger, and its successful aversion, roused a spirit that would not sink tamely into passivity. From their outward dangers their energies were turned upon their interior advancement. Then followed their golden era. Manly art of all kinds; literature, bold, masculine, and fervent; and commerce, steady, patient, and honourable, flourished in the land. Under the sun there never has been,

making the necessary allowances for the age, so prosperous, so altogether great a nation, as Greece at the time of Aristides.

What overthrew this? By what calamity did Greece sink into the miserable inanity wherein she has languished unalleviated for some twenty centuries? The cause could not be in the government: no government, however bad, could possibly have ruined, or even degraded, a people such as were the Aristidean Greeks. The cause of all the evils lay in themselves. As gains accumulated, commerce was turned from its proper employment of mutual support, and followed chiefly as a means for procuring unlimited prodigality and refined voluptuousness of body and intellect. Arts, that before had tended to gratify that thirst for the Beautiful which so largely dwells in every healthy mind, in the course of time were prostituted before growing sensuality and glittering depravity, and were made the instruments for satiating the newly-kindling, fast-extending thirst for costly superfluities, and all the effeminate luxuries of the senses. From manly men the Greeks sank swiftly, and ever more swiftly, into elegant machines. To keep pace, also, with the bodily sleekness, the mind gradually adopted a tone of bland oiliness, and truth was in every instance sacrificed to conventional smoothness, until, a century after the heroic age of Miltiades and Aristides, we find them sunk so low as to fully warrant the remark that they had "become a de-

generate race ; *levity* and indolence\* had taken the place of patriotism and honourable ambition !” Let that word *levity* be noted particularly ; it is of itself the key to the fall of Greece, and of every other empire, ancient, mediæval, or modern.

Soon this luxuriousness and *levity* began to show itself in their literature. Instead of revelling in the proud child-like Sampsonism of the Homeric poetry, and the severe sublimity of the drama, comicalities, personalities, buffoonery, and obscenities formed the staple of their popular compositions. The nation that could tamely submit to, nay, eagerly applaud, a man like Socrates being openly ridiculed on their stage, was already fast advancing towards its period of visible decay. But that was not all ; the very gods were laughed at. The stern old deities, real deities now no longer, became legitimate subjects for wit and frivolous jestings. A scepticism took possession of the people, and the gods were rendered nullities. This did not proceed from a conviction of the falsity of such gods : had it done so, it would have been well (though surely a cast-off *faith* of any kind, however unworthy, should produce another tone of memory than that). On the contrary, they were still professedly worshippers of their old deities—Socrates was poisoned for denying them ; and hecatombs were offered to the omnipotent Powers at the very time when half the city was

\* Dr. Vaughan's Age of Great Cities, p. 32.

enjoying the ridicule of their peccadilloes and extravagant adventures.

A nation of men thus so degenerate from all real manliness required no evil government to accelerate its fall. It had the sure seeds of that fall deep-sown and far-scattered within itself. That no Solon, no Lycurgus, no lawgiver, sincerely and earnestly bent upon producing a code intrinsically true, and not vitiated into conformity with the evil demands of the time—that no such appeared, and that the state was corrupt, discordant, and paralysed from its imbecility and dividedness, was but the natural result, and not in any way the cause, of such degeneracy.

Every prodigal voluptuary, then, every elegant and flippant conventionalist, as he plunged deeper into his prodigality and brilliant hollowness, added his share to the final extinction of the prosperity of his race and nation!

This is not a new theory. It finds a place among others in many histories and essays, but it is a neglected one. Smothered and concealed by the blatant self-importance of the senatorial solutions, it is, nevertheless, one that should not be so neglected, that should not be allowed to lie unnoticed, but perpetually should be brought forward prominently, as the one great all-explaining fact, in no time so particularly as the present, when the root of all our errors and disasters is our regarding government as the cause of all good and of all evil—as a power, as it were, *out* of the nation,

and working upon it ; and not, on the contrary, as the mere surface of the great social stream, which flows on quietly beneath its wave-broken, gas-coloured breast; the surface not influencing the waters underneath it—but true or false, substance or shadow, as the ceaseless undercurrent varies.

Turn to whatever history we will, the principle here indicated receives abundant confirmation. When rigid manliness and unbending energy animated the Roman people, there was found no power upon this earth to impede their vast triumphs : and so, when those vanished, and all that is meaner, weaker, and more trivial in our nature usurped their place, and became the leading features in the Roman character, no imperial splendour, no military talent, could avert their ruin. When Tacitus, in his discriminating treatise on the manners and customs of the Germans, gives us such a vivid picture of their simple reality, their wild truthfulness of life, he lets us into the whole secret of the sack of Rome. The sleek Roman, surrounded by a world of empty nothings, with no one fact to base himself upon, arising from his enfeebling baths, how could he cope with the northern invaders, to whom victory was not the means whereby to purchase new enervation and refinement, but existence itself? The Romans lost their foreign sway, their own inner prosperity also, because they were no longer Romans, because they deserved to lose it\*.

\* Dr. Schmitz thus paints the character of the early Romans :  
“ Their character was more severe and warlike, and practical and

If, from these twin empires of antiquity, we glance at the lesser powers of the middle ages, we are again compelled to adopt similar conclusions. What could be more unique than the closely-welded independence of the Italian Republican cities—Florence, for instance—when its citizens were plain, thrifty merchants, seeking more for adequate remuneration than vast accumulation; and when their lives were simple, unostentatious, and religious? Florence maintained an honourable position in the world despite her intestine factions. Under the mild wise guidance of the good old Cosmo de Medici, the historical eye rests on Florence with a peculiar love. But when, under his grandson's reign of ultra-refinement, every real thing was sacrificed to outer sumptuosities, and when it became a sign of scholarlike good breeding to hold Paganism while conforming punctiliously to all the ceremonials of Catholic Christianity, clouds began to gather; and the very magnificence of the smooth Lorenzo contributed not a little to the disastrous era which followed under his immediate descendants.

But the fall of empires is fast becoming an undomestic duties had more charms for them than for the volatile Greeks (*i. e.* the Greeks of the same time, then in their wane). Their domestic life was of the simplest kind." (History of Rome, p. 95.) And Gibbon speaks thus of some characteristics at the beginning of their fall:—"They diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods; . . . they concealed the sentiments of an Atheist under the sacerdotal robes." "Tacitus indulges an honest pleasure in the contrast of barbarian virtue with the dissolute conduct of the Roman ladies."



known thing; because empires have well nigh ceased to be great in the ancient sense. If there be now one pre-eminent power answering in any way to Rome or Greece, it is England. But hers is not a supremacy over enslaved tributary nations, a feudal brute-force domination. Far from that: it is a power of a moral rather than a physical description, of the conquest of enlightenment, common sense, and commercial skill, and not of belligerent aggression. Her supremacy consists in the moral weight she possesses among the other powers of the world. It is much the same with foreign nations; those that are great are not so according to the extent of their territories and the number of their subjects. Napoleon endeavoured to repeat the old story of an all-conquering people, a revived Rome; and he ultimately failed so entirely as effectually to deter any other future attempt in that direction; consequently, instead of nations falling from their "pride of place" into the persecuted tributary subjects of a newer and more powerful race, crises—ruinous, terrible, prostrating, political, commercial, and social crises—are the forms in which such falls will, for the proximate future, be experienced. The modern phasis of the fall of empires is therefore—Revolution. Not that I would insinuate that a revolution is a parallel to the utter extinction of all prosperity and greatness, which constituted those falls. A revolution is an intenser, more terrible, but a less enduring evil. It is necessary

that from time to time the accumulated chaff and rubbish of the world be burnt; and as, in the new epoch we have entered upon, no nation will ever again go spark out, as was once the custom, we must look for our corresponding *dénouements* to revolutions.

But though the form of the fall of nations has changed, the causes have in no wise done so. France presents the most fearful perfect picture of a revolution; and when, in seeking for the origin thereof, I endeavour to obtain an accurate idea of her social state preceding it, I find that which immediately removes all surprise from my mind that such an event occurred, and reconciles me to its uttermost excesses as the necessary ending of such gigantic corruption. I discover perhaps the most appalling spectacle of ultra-refined imbecility of character, the most utter abnegation of morality and devotion, the most frivolous and volatile tone of society the history of the world presents. The faith of ages, grown corrupt, debased, and worthless, was attacked, but not seriously, earnestly, and devoutly, as befitted such a sacred crusade as that should have been; but it was sapped and paralysed by the light sarcasms and witty ridicule of flippant sceptics, many of whom conformed to the rites of the church they so derided. The husk of religion was carefully defended and honoured, but that alone: its life and spirit were not in France at all at that season. From king to bourgeois, from cardinal

to curé, from encyclopédist to pamphleteer, licentious abandonment of chastity, virtue, and religion, frivolous repudiation of the barriers God and man have raised against our baser propensities, were the salient characteristics of French eighteenth-century society. And even this was not done in the best spirit. They did not say soberly "we have decided that marriage is unnatural and wrong, that indiscriminate intercourse is better;" that would have been honest immorality; neither did they declare in serious earnestness "we have been compelled to decide that there is no God, and that Christianity is an imposture;" that, after its fashion, would have been honest too; such honesty was far from being in them. Their conduct was its exact antipodes. They *professed* belief in what they laughed to scorn, were intolerant rather than otherwise of openly-professed unbelief; they dexterously contrived, by social sophistry, to change the laws of society, until licentiousness was the test of fashion, and they conformed rigorously enough to the marriage system, but perverted it, until instead of being the solemn concentration of passion to one object, and the consequent repudiation of all wandering desires, it became the only respectable door, the natural passport, to unrestrained indulgence. And so this social excrescence on the face of nature swelled, until the corruption, having penetrated every section of the machinery of society, attained its height, and then burst fearfully, as is known.

The subject is not by any means exhausted. I have hardly done more than indicate the existence and importance of these truths, and surely they require no further arguments or illustrations to increase their force. The lesson such reflections and conclusions are intended to convey is also very obvious. It is to insist upon the paramount necessity for individual self-watchfulness and individual reformation to the maintenance and improvement of the nation at large. It is to place the tendencies and state of the social and moral life in the position of precedence hitherto ceded to the political life, and consequently to show that the true method for attaining an accurate idea of our national soundness, our national tendencies and wants, is to examine, as closely and as minutely as we can, the neglected symptoms of our social soundness or morbidness—our social tendencies and wants.

## § 2. *On the rationale of civilization.*

When Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his peculiar feverish sentimentality of philanthropy, advocated an universal return of the human race to their original state of nature, he was by no means so utterly delirious as the world in general has decided. Indeed, to diverge a little, it may be laid down as an axiom, that no man of ordinary capacity can possibly adopt a theory of even

the most absurd and suicidal tendency, really believing it, and advocate the said theory with such passionate earnestness as was employed by Rousseau, without there being some sensible and practical idea at the bottom of it. The philosopher endeavours to penetrate into the originative idea; and the collection of all the true ideas which lurk within the madnesses of genius of all ages is the sum of the wisdom of the world.

Rousseau, therefore, in his organic idea will be found to be right; but the extent to which he carried that idea in the development of his heaven-sent germ, will be found to be illogical and extravagant. Looking with his intensely sensitive insight upon France as we have painted it in our former section; beholding the frightful mass of complex imbecility and corruption that everywhere environed him; seeing how civilization had eaten away as a rust all manliness and honesty, until, wherever he turned, he could find fashionable men, refined men, and French men, but could not, wheresoever he went, discover a plain and absolute man; finding no human being, but only their stuffed skins set in motion by artful machinery, personating life around him, and personating horribly to burlesque; it was only natural that Rousseau should view civilization with antipathy and dismay, as the sole cause of all the evils he loathed and warred against. But, like all other philanthropists who endeavour to find one theory for the manifold derelictions of the human race, he

pushed his hatred against civilization into a wide extreme; and, instead of denouncing *excess* of civilization, threw it overboard altogether as a curse, and advocated, as we know, an utter re-assumption of our primary life of degraded animalism, instead of showing where and how far civilization had grown an evil, and, by a valiant renunciation of such excesses on his own part, setting his world an example of civilization in its due limits, as an agent and not a master. He lived and indulged in all the civilization he could gain access to, and relieved his sympathetic heart, when in his better hours he brooded over human misery and ruin, by maintaining a doctrine of which his own life was a denial and a refutation.

But if he erred on the side of a state of nature, we are disposed to err as grossly and far more dangerously on the other. No man, by such a theory as that of Rousseau, will ever be led to sink the man into the animal, as he recommends; but many men will be aroused to throw overboard some particle of moral and mental effeminacy, and to attempt in some degree a manlier life; whereas the theory of the illimitable progress of civilization, that the highest extent to which it is carried the better is it for humanity (and which theory is now dominant here, even to autocracy), will always bear with it its disciples to the whole length of their power; for it is seductive and sensuously pleasant, and requires no self-denying courage to follow it to the full. And certainly, if

the choice has to be made between the two extremes, viz. the state of nature advocated by Rousseau, and the state of ultra-refinement to which civilization has hitherto universally led, we must conclude that the former is the more preferable of the two. The American Indian is more in the image of God than Beau Brummel or Lord Frederick Verisopht. Savage and ignorant he may be, but he is at any rate manlike in his habits and turn of thought. He has not lost his ever-present reverence for the Great Spirit, and he will not lie; there is honesty in him; do him good service, and he will be grateful; offend him, injure him, and he slays you on the spot. But in the others you have nothing but vague inanity, in which is neither mental nor bodily manliness, nor honesty, nor truth. They remind one of those gelatinous fishes which have a certain pulpy life in them, infinitely disagreeable to sight and touch, and useless as far as we can see. And, as regards the relative effects of the twain, as developed in the mass of the people, we have only to return to the former section, and mark refined Rome shrivel before savage Germany, to understand which it is that wrecks an empire.

Hence it would appear that, however much at variance it may seem with our modern jargon about spread of civilization and the march of refinement, there is in civilization, as in all other onward principles, a standard of wholesome height—a medium, beyond which it is not good to go.

The rapid rise of civilization in a country; and the motive power which the thirst for it enkindles, is the origin of the rapid progress of young nations: this motive power supports and elevates until the medium is attained; and then, when that is overstepped, their power weakens and dissipates itself more fleetly than it gathered itself together; something as a pear bursts from its blossom, greens, ripens to its prime, and if not then gathered—rots!

It therefore becomes an object of weighty importance to a people who have attained to a very great amount of refinement, to discover when civilization exceeds its healthful limits, and tends to unsoundness and decline.

There are in man certain fundamental elements necessary to his true existence, which are there as eternal requisites, and which can never be outraged by anything in itself truthful. What those elements are, I shall endeavour in the ensuing section to show. In the mean time, for our present subject it will be sufficient to say, that it is when refinement comes into collision with those elements that it transgresses its legal limits, and that every advance in such a direction is a step to ruin.

The proper function of civilization may be described as the softening down of our brutish, and the increasing development of our spiritual nature; the subjugation of the gross to the ethereal. So long, therefore, as it is confined to that, the true end of intellect is being accomplished by its



agency; but when, after having refined the brutal, it begins to prey upon and tear down what is purely spiritual, then it becomes a moral mortification, contagious and not easily arrested. Let me define my meaning.

The savage man when asked a question requiring a negative reply will thunder out his "No," coarsely and abruptly; when he is led by refinement to infuse kindness and courtesy into that "No," he has clearly been rendered manlier and better by the change; but when he is induced by a super-sublime suavity of manner, instead of a decisive "No," to lisp a faltering "Yes," civilization has overstepped its bounds, and is plunging him below his pristine savageness into a bottomless abyss of bright vacuity.

When—from transacting his physical routine in rude herculean jerks and boisterous onslaughts; from clothing himself, like a wild animal, in skins; from chasing his food and feeding like a beast of prey—man teaches himself to soften his actions into the smoothness, order, and precision of a thinking being, to adapt his costume to comfort and usefulness, and to purify the rabid coarseness of his appetite by a finer diet, he is on the ascending side of the mountain. But alas, there comes a period when the smoothness and order of his actions will merge into the helplessness of a sickly over-oiled machine; when his mind will study and brood over his costume; as over a thing of more importance than the embellishment and

adornment of the mind and soul; when his refinement of diet will lapse into a disgusting gluttony or sensitive epicureism; and when such a consummation has been attained, the sum of civilization is a blight. Thus it is seen how and when the march of refinement becomes pernicious.

Unfortunately civilization never spreads equally. In one nation you have the ultra-refined and the untutored boor, and it is when the former epithet becomes so applicable to the influential classes that they and the part of the community to whom the latter term belong clash together, and when brutal turbulence hurries on the imbecile to congenial action, that the decadent term of an empire has set in. If there is ever to be such a thing as a *model empire* here below, it will be one wherein civilization having attained its healthy height rises no further, but spreads itself more and more, until the whole people have attained an equal level of cultivation and refinement.

### § 3. *The ideal of the perfect man.*

Before actually commencing our survey of Social England, it is absolutely imperative that we endeavour to arrive at some understanding relative to what man ought to be when perfectly developed; what qualities should predominate in

him, and what should be the tenor of his life. This will be best effected by affirmation. Let me assert plainly what I consider necessary to the formation of a true man, divergence from which I consider as an evil, and then the reader will understand at once by what gauge I am about to estimate the English people of to-day.

This is rendered more necessary, as there appears to be no definite idea in the nation regarding the point of excellence to be struggled after by us. We are all agreed as to the badness of stealing, lying, and murder; and further than that, there are few who would deny what we are going to bring forward, but it is not certainly before the eyes of the people, concentratedly and vividly, what things are absolutely good and what are absolutely bad. We have no fixed standard—no high ideal of human perfection before us of which we are jealous, endeavour after which we laud, and departure from which we condemn. The only standard we ever employ is not one absolutely true, but the convenient standard of comparison. Comparison—comparative statistics are the only tests in use at present. If I assert the immorality of our large towns, immediately the ever-ready Statist pounces upon me, and demonstrates, by a vortex of figures, that they are better than the rural districts, and having proved that, he goes away satisfied, and considers that he has disproved my assertions, as if the moral result of rural life was the highest state of morality at-

tainable below ; or if I mention the practical irreligion into which England has so lamentably fallen, I am shown directly that we are primitive Christians compared with the Continental nations, and that is supposed to end the argument. If we can only flatter our national vanity (and much flattery is not required) that we are superior to surrounding countries, all endeavour to attain a still higher superiority is scouted as Utopian. The same system is carried on in private life precisely in the like manner ; and not a little abandoned profligacy, selfish hard-heartedness, and hollow conformity to things unbelieved, is sanctioned by the consideration that many are as bad, and more worse. If we are not quite devils, that will do ; as to comparing ourselves with angels, and aspiring after their qualities, a whisper is never heard.

Such a qualified, time-serving standard would ill accord with the design of this book. We know too well that if a nation be not progressing towards an abstract excellence, apart from all comparison, it will be retrograding towards an abstract degradation ; and so we must betake ourselves into the sterner atmospheres of the Past, and, communing with its Prophets and Apostles, shape together something like an absolute Ideal of the individual or social man.

The task is not so difficult as would seem at first sight ; for though our whole system of life is one large denial of most of the nobler attributes of man, that denial is virtual and practical, and by

no means abstract and theoretical. No living man would set himself to defend the laws of modern society on the grounds of conformity with man's destination, however many might do so on those of expediency and convenience. Press men plainly in argument, and all will be found to know, well enough, what qualities are noble in themselves and in their brethren, and what are ignoble. The emptiest fashion-monger, if asked whether he courted Lord Dives because of his equipage and cash, would repel the idea, however true it might be in fact: he would feel it was ignoble to reverence a man for such reasons. But if he were told that he admired Mr. B. for his sterling worth, he would not repel that, although he, in reality, might snub the gentleman, because of his exiguous income. For as, in history, there is no mistaking a genuinely great man, when once fairly brought to light, so in every-day life, there is no mistaking what qualities are good and great, and what are base and little. They have been the same in all ages, and will remain unaltered to the end. Let the reader pause a little, and reflect upon the leading characteristics in the idiosyncrasies of Job, David, Jesus, Paul, Mahomet, Luther, Milton, or Cromwell, and he will have no difficulty in assenting to the following exposition of the elements of a True Man.

The first quality, without which no true nobility can exist, and which in these times is of itself a degree of greatness, the deep substratum of every-

thing else, pervading and colouring the whole character, is Spirituality, or Religion. There must be a solemn ever-present feeling that he is an immortal Spirit, not a mere bodily agent of the most wonderful mechanism, only sent here to vie with the horse or mule in material labour, but also a Being standing before the Eternal God, whose every thought and action has an everlasting tendency, and whose existence is not bounded by the grave. A cold acknowledgment of this is not what I mean by Spirituality. Every one confesses it with his lips; churches and chapels are supported by the universal admission of that truth; but there are hundreds of thousands in England who have so acknowledged it throughout their lives, and whose composition is, at this day, devoid of any spiritual element, however meagre. What is required to constitute the Spirituality we mean is, that it should be an active, effective, incentive fact,—there, like a pillar of fire to guide the man upward; to influence and to impregnate all the routine of life; and that the struggle of his existence should be for the subjugation of the sensual and the gross to the spiritual and the pure; and that is emphatically, Religion. That a man should have before his eyes the mighty land he inherits, and should endeavour to refine his earthly nature into a meetness for its ethereal atmosphere, by discarding, as much and as continually as may be, the purely finite and perishable, and embracing the sempiternal and enduring, is the professed end and aim

of every religion here below. The religious element is, therefore, the first and chief ingredient in the constitution of a genuine man.

But, in the absence of other qualities, religion may be rendered null. Many are the souls who have never lost sight of their immortality, but whose lives have been a miserable imbecility, an elaborate whining for their other home. There are many with the same belief ever within them, with an intense desire of soul for a continuous expansion of, and fidelity to, their spiritual behests, who have, nevertheless, been renegades through life, never embodying their belief in action; hence, to complete the full measure of the man, numerous other qualities are indispensable. Insight, clear, vigorous, penetrating Insight, in order to see what there is for the man himself to do; what share in the mighty concerns of the universe he is called upon to take; in what direction the assertion and unbending maintenance of his spiritual descent can be the most extensively effected; that is a great requisite. Truth of nature, is then needed to report faithfully the observations made, and to guide the decisions to be arrived at, and to be the great key-note of the soul, crying "Discord, discord," whenever outward pressure lures us into a departure from the dictates of that insight.

Courage and Earnestness, then, are demanded, in order that what is decided should be done, done forthwith. Here it is that many fail: they have not courage, when the world laughs and makes

mockery at them, or passes them by with inflated scorn, to brave it all, and to say to the world, "I am here to be a true man, and a true judge will judge me, and not you;" neither have they earnestness of purpose, sufficient to render obloquy, contempt, and incessant labour, mere straws of obstruction, which the mighty swoop of intense convictions, marching in earnest action, bear down uncared for; hence we have such sublime speaking, and such paltry results. All nature is in league against indifference to thwart it: all the universe leagues itself *with* earnestness of heart, and all things are surmounted by it. Earnestness alone might almost be given as the one requisite for an ideal man, for none can be earnest without he is sincere, and no man capable of the earnestness I mean could be sincerely convinced of a hard unspiritual animalism. Earnestness, as opposed to insincerity and hollowness, stands as the representative of the True, as they do of the False. It is the faith that removes mountains. From the earliest dawn of history, good causes have withered and died away for lack of earnest supporters to maintain them, and bad causes have fought their way to the highest eminence of power, by being espoused by men who, convinced of their supposed goodness, have not spent their time in idle rhapsodizing in their behalf. When, in the patriarchal ages, the momentous truths of life lay heavy on the minds of the ancient seers, Earnestness, fervid and unsleeping, it was that kindled their thoughts



into very fire, and wrote those prophet-poems which thrill into the innermost recesses of the religious soul. In the warlike ages it was earnestness of purpose that made the ebullient masses of armed adventurers, out-crowded from their own domain, victorious wheresoever they appeared; so that a thousand soldiers, led by one earnest leader, could land upon a hostile shore, and, by the very intensity of their determination, cut their way through opposing cohorts to the very core of the kingdom. The Puritans and Cavaliers were closely matched in numbers; the latter, perhaps, the more powerful; but the Puritans conquered overwhelmingly, simply because they battled with their whole souls for what with their whole souls they believed, while the former combated for the ghost of a something they could neither define nor defend. And now, when we live in an age of Commerce, and the reign of chivalry and prophecy are ended, earnestness is still the one vivifying spark, the motive power for evil or for good. It is that which sends the swift railway through the bowels of the earth, over trembling swamps, and in the jaws of mountains; it is that which plucks hoary political injustice by the beard, crushes the malignant relics of feudalism, and repeals monopolies: in a word, though a man may act a consummate mischief and be earnest, it is totally impossible that any one can be a man at all, in any manly sense, without being largely endowed with that quality.

Such being the elementary principles of a true man, what is the nature of a true man's life? The answer might be gathered from the detail of the principles themselves. But it is a theme that will bear recapitulation. To use a religious phrase, life should be one proud and unwavering effort to act in conformity with Conscience. Above the uproar of the passions, and the noisy clamour of the "working-day world," is heard the mighty voice within us, dealing forth its tremendous canons—the absolute law of life. Deep in the heart of every man is placed that voice of God to guide him: when he presses on to virtue it assists him and applauds; when he rushes into vice it struggles to arrest him; and when defeated records its bitter protest. Neglect it, do it violence, and it retires within itself, and it becomes fainter, until it is heard no more, and the bark of being floats rudderless on a sea of strife: listen to its admonitions, be guided by its counsel, and it enlarges with the enlarging intellect, and how high soever we may mount it is still far above us, shedding light upon the mazy wilderness and beaconing the path to God. The following of Conscience, with the qualities we have named in full exercise, never has been and never can be an easy or a gentle task. The life of Jesus Christ was no child's play, no tranquil gliding along the stream of Hebrew etiquette and custom; the life of George Fox also was not pleasant in a worldly sense. The steady-going comfortable man who, never perturbed by doubt, never excited

to agonized exertion by the fierce promptings of his spirit, drifts on through life plausibly unto death, finds the world easy, no doubt, and his career would be enviable if with death it ended. But since, as we believe, it does not end there, death is but in fact the portal to a longer life, to which this splutter of existence is as a dew-drop to the ocean. It stands to reason, that to act as though worldly serenity were our ultimate end, is unwise and unworthy ; that therefore a sterner and a harder life is more in keeping with the idea of a heavenly crusade, wherein by battling we must win ourselves victory and a home.

There is a time in the life of such as are led to join that heavenly crusade, when the faith of boyhood falls away like the too narrow shell from an expanding fish inhabitant, and when the fair sunshine of childish trust has to undergo the dark eclipse of doubt ; and when, from the shivered fragments which lie around him, the young crusader has, amid tears and uncertainties, and huge heart-bursting appeals to God for light and for assistance, to shape for himself a new belief. He may reconstruct that in which he was nurtured, or he may not ; but such a crisis is necessary to the manliness of his being, that his belief—his chief thing below—be not received as a bequest, second hand, but be verily and indeed his own. When that era is safely ended, sluggish idleness must not even then ensue. There must be no looking back. A belief is a mockery if it be not an acted one.

First, therefore, there are the outer sensuous temptations to oppose and conquer; hot desires raging, and the tendency to ease and luxurious enjoyment preying upon and striving to deaden the sense of duty which leads to self-denial and active labour. Then, when all is accomplished in that quarter, and the allurements and dangers of the world of sense are trodden under foot, there follows a fiercer conflict within the soul itself—the disappointment and humiliation of beholding incessantly a perfect ideal and achieving but an imperfect reality; the path of duty lying so clear and manifest before us, and the constantly recurring departure from it; the soaring like Icarus into the sunny regions of a holy life, and then suddenly, in the very midst of our triumph, falling into the depths of abasement, with nothing left but to re-arise and struggle on again undauntedly, and in the end only to purchase victory by death.

Such is the life of man when he throws overboard falsehood, and bases himself upon the primitive and fundamental truths of his nature. The vocabulary of every-day life has many epithets for such men; they are “visionaries,” “enthusiasts,” “fanatics,” and worldly wisdom sees nothing in it save insanity that should at any cost be put down. But put down it never can be; for he who is conscious of following out what the voice of God within him dictates, can afford to smile at the expletives of the shallow world: he plants himself upon the one great fact of his im-

mortality, and, living in that, sees beyond the troubles and turmoils that environ him here, into the far mysteries of that other land, from whence his consolation and his strength proceed.

#### § 4. *Pause and survey.*

Regarding all that has now been written, it is anticipated that it will be condemned as tautological and uncalled for. If the former be true, it arises from a desire to communicate a clear and unmistakeable understanding of my meaning; and, as regards the latter, it was necessary, before setting forth upon our pilgrimage, to examine the barrenness or fruitfulness of the land, that we should shape for ourselves a divining rod; that we should collect those numerous particles of truth which float around us into one concrete whole, and so constitute a plain and visible line of demarcation between the good and the evil. If an intelligent reader dissent from our data, question our starting point, he will be most unlikely to sympathise with our conclusions, to reach our goal.

First, we have endeavoured to establish that the cause of all national decay, as of all national prosperity, originates in the social condition of the people themselves; and that, therefore, the most insignificant domestic, social, and religious tendencies are intrinsically of more importance than wars and orations, and senatorial conflicts, which

are, indeed, but the weathercocks, and not the wind. To this the practice of England is one huge denial. Almost the whole of the energy and the intelligence of the country are concentrated upon politics, to the total neglect of social advancement. Week after week in every newspaper are three or four articles on some political movement, frequently quite an unimportant one; now lamenting a retrogression, now indignantly exposing an imposture, or loudly calling attention to a dangerous manifestation; but when was there seen an article calling the like attention to any such social manifestation? But rarely. The social interference of newspapers is, for the most part, confined to the salaries of town clerks and the election of beadles. See, also, with what might and determination the whole intelligence of the nation set itself to repeal the Corn Laws; what perseverance, energy, and earnest devotion were expended to gain that end; and now that that end is gained, have we not the same perseverance and devotedness called into play for other political causes? Men leave their homes of an evening, and rush excited to large halls and meeting rooms, to strain their throats and expend their energies in effecting the saving to themselves of a few annual pence; but to ameliorate the social condition of England, to discover its evils and its evil tendencies, and to reform them, and to elevate the tone of thought and living, there are but few orators parading the land, few monster gatherings, or bushels of pamphlets,

or expended energies. Surely this is very monstrous. I do not seek to disparage the political reformer; I acknowledge his importance, and take him to heart as a true and judicious labourer in the good cause; but I do say that it is monstrous that well nigh *all* the intellect and the action of the country should be turned upon legislative matters, especially when social affairs are the more vitally important. The two reforms should always go hand in hand. Let those whose genius prompts them to political action begin at once and follow it up as fully and as bravely as they can; but do let us have at least an equal amount of thought and intellect directed to observing our social manifestations, and suggesting remedies where they find them to be wrong. Our first step is therefore accomplished, if we can only induce the reader to see the importance of the present attempt, however ill it may be achieved.

Our second position was no less in opposition to the spirit of the age. It was to insist upon the necessity for a careful watch being kept upon the progress of what is called "civilization." To insist upon the danger of an excess of it, and also of the certainty of its tendency to excess. We defined its excess as the enervation of the upright independent mind, and the weakening of the power of spiritual truth within us. In our coming investigations, this must be ever in view, in order that when we see such a result we may know it to be evil, and proclaim it for what it is.

Lastly, we have specified those qualities we ought to struggle to possess, and possessing, incessantly to cultivate; and we have painted the ideal of a sterling manly life of true spiritual effort. It may be summed up briefly as the intense desire, resolve, and endeavour to discover God's will, and, having discovered it, to act in obedience to it, in the face of the whole universe, if it be that it stands between us and that obedience;—that also must be kept in view. Let us go forth, understanding that such a life alone is admirable; that any other, however respectable in a worldly sense, is, in proportion as it differs from such a life, insignificantly empty, or positively bad. If we find society so constituted as to assist a man in his attempts after a conscientious earnest existence, and the men themselves engaging in life as a fact and a solemnity, asserting their spirituality, and believing in the Depths of Intuition and Religion, we shall, according to these preparatory conclusions, assert that its tendency is upward. But, on the other hand, if we find few such men, and discover that our social life is but one revolution upon the same too polished yet barren axis, and that, so far from aiding a man in his lofty struggles, it hinders and annoys him at every step, then we shall say that the tendency of the times is downward.

A social "Progress of the Nation" is very far from my intention in this effort. I am not seeking to show what we have done, but only what we have



to do. I am aware of the advances we have made in many things ; aware of several features unnoticed in these pages ; but I do not consider that I should be doing good service to bring them forward here. The public has done nothing else lately but glory over them, to the total forgetting of the insignificance of our achievements with what remains to be achieved. Leaving it, therefore, for others to trumpet the praises of the times, I shall confine myself to an enunciation of its evil features. Abjuring all comparison, I shall not estimate anything by what our ancestors were, or by what our continental neighbours are, but solely by the abstract, ultimate truth of the matter. It cannot reconcile me to the badnesses round about me, to know that my grandfather had not Berlin carpets, and paid threepence a pound more than I do for his sugar. I will admit all the progress the most ardent progressionist requires, if that will quiet him ; but I say, when he has concluded his catalogue, that we are far from the mountain top as yet, and cry "Excelsior ! Excelsior !"

A word on another point, ere we close this chapter. The world has a great objection to adventures like the present. It will never take them for what they are, but only for what they are not. Instead of regarding them as the opinions of one man, printed and sent abroad, it always looks upon the writer as a kind of upstart apostle, a dogmatic theorist, who takes upon himself to lecture mankind, and to teach better

informed persons than he ; such is not the spirit to receive any book in. When any man, however humble, really sets himself to look into life as it environs him on every hand, and when, from the fulness of his heart, his pen discourses, the wisest man, however lofty, may read without scorn, as wisdom is not alone the maxims of received sages, but the true thought of humanity at large.

In no arrogant or dogmatic strain of mind is this labour of ours commenced ; but in humility, and fear, and love. From amid the stir and clatter of this thronged and crowded Manchester existence I have looked forth into the world around, and with passionate sorrow and sympathetic affection have marked the workings of life and the haps and chances of our fellow-men, until silence has grown impossible, or, if possible, a crime ; and this attempt is but the chaotic reflections and conclusions arrived at, shaped into something like order, plainly, fully, and truly chronicled.

Amid the wreck and devastation of continental powers, we, in our narrow island, are as a divided cohort, the forlorn hope of European life. Ceaselessly on, unresting, do we march, obeying hidden orders that we hear not, but feel and follow, and the end of the journey the wisest cannot surmise. Why then should not a brother in the corps, at times when the gales blow confusedly around us, fling up were it even but the lightest feather to test the Whitherward of it all?

## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC TENDENCIES OF THE AGE.

“ We must run glittering, like a brook,  
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest ;  
\* \* \* \* Rapine, avarice, expense—  
This is idolatry ; and these we adore ;  
*Plain living and high thinking are no more.*”

WORDSWORTH.

My own personal remembrances do not extend to any particularly remote period, but, from the few remaining samples of the middle classes of the close of last century, and from what we can gather by other means, it would appear that they were chiefly of a rough burly character, speaking generally the peculiar dialect of their county ; of uncommonly limited education and book knowledge, but, replete with sound practical experience and money-making wisdom, despising such superfluities, leading a life of plain economy and rough naturalness ; scorning for the most part all polish of manners and refinement in general : in a word, the exact incorporation of the ideal John Bull, blunt, sturdy, sagacious, with an absorbing swinishness of soul and body.

Such a race is now fast dying out ; a few isolated

specimens only yet linger to prove the fact that our grandfathers were cast in such a mould; and come a few deaths, and we shall have none but the proof of memory to demonstrate that such was once the case. No longer is education deemed incompatible with the more material business of money-making and the general duties of practical life, but, on the contrary, it is regarded as the primary requirement, and almost as indispensable as practical ability; no longer is it considered presumption to unite the polish of a gentleman with the sagacity of a merchant; no longer are the bar, and the lighter walks in life, held sacred to the younger sons of the upper classes. A complete revolution has been effected. For the most part, in sterling education, true manners, and outward polish, the middle-class man is the equal of the peer. The colleges, the church, the bar, the government office, the seat in parliament, are open to, attainable by, the middle-class man. His house is no longer a cottage, but a comparative mansion; and a Manchester manufacturer, a Liverpool speculator, or a London merchant, oftentimes dwells in an every way more princely dwelling than many a continental prince or British nobleman.

Such an entire change in the whole aspect of middle-class life is surprising, if only for the brief space in which it has all been effected; and it naturally creates anxiety and reflective attention, since all this must have an ultimate tendency, and

a consummation proportionate in magnitude to the extent of the revolution that has been effected. A movement of such generality and speed must be vitally important; the change must be good or bad; and it is our business to discover which of the twain it may be, and how far it is so.

The first symptom noticeable in connection therewith is the age's self-knowledge of the importance of the movement, though not in my sense of importance—its firm conviction and ceaseless eulogies of the grandeur of its metamorphoses. In every place where men meet now-a-days, in the great temple of life, are Pharisees, standing up in boastful thankfulness to gratulate themselves that they are not as their grandsires were. "In these days of refinement"—"In this era of enlightenment and civilization," is the favourite opening for an article on the times, in our magazines and journals; and as for the "nineteenth century," it does nothing but run up and down the land, bedecked with its phylacteries, like a hen that has laid her virgin egg, and knows not what to make of it, strutting noisily about, and cackling, with endless repetition, "Look at me! Admire me! I have laid my egg—I am the Nineteenth Century!"

Whenever such feminine conceit on the part of any large movement is perceived, it should instantly send us to a reconsideration; and, however we might before have been disposed to join in the

admiring cry that follows the car of social revolution, we ought, in discovering such self-conscious vanity on its part, to do one of two things—either to decide at once that it must be intrinsically an imposture and a quackery, or else, admitting its virtues, to despise its weakness. Nothing is pleasanter than to eulogize and admire the present—to conceive your own era the grandest that has ever been, and to feel convinced of your own incalculable superiority to your progenitors. The very magniloquence of such a strain engenders a blinding rapture, so as effectually to impede a steady and dispassionate survey; but when the power of such rapture has abated, and you turn the cool broad eye of universal catholic reflection upon the little atom of a subject we name the present, then much that seemed gold shrivels into tinsel, and that which we thought to be the purest aliment is found upon analysis to be little else than poison. Thus we are compelled to damp the ardour of this nineteenth-century self-laudation, by putting to it, in sad sincerity, interrogations such as these: Has your refinement strictly in every case preserved the due limits wherein consists its proper sphere, or has it overstepped them and embraced something to which its touch is a pollution? In softening away the beast and its brute-like qualities into the measured symmetry of man, has not your civilization gone into the more lamentable extreme of toning down the man into the dancing

master? In a word, after all this refinement and march of intellect, do the inherent high qualities of the people remain as strong as before, and ever-strengthening; or are they less brutal, less coarse-minded than of old, but also less independent, less vigorous, and less manly?

After much probing, earnest reflection, and extended inquiry, an unequivocal answer must be recorded *against* the age. We are compelled to decide that its present tendencies are dangerous in the extreme; for whithersoever the eye turns, on every hand is repeated the same melancholy story of the sensuous taste, the indolences of the soul, and the pride of life, preying like vampires upon society at large. In every clique is dominant the same despicable ambition of aping the extravagancies and the follies of the grade next higher in the social scale, of endeavouring after the shadow and the glitter of an external existence, and the wholesale scorning of its inner kernel.

Such a complaint, falling suddenly upon the ear of a conventional man, may sound querulous, but it is not so. The more and the deeper life is examined by the great standard of absolute truth, the more it appears that what at a distance was taken for a rocky mountain is little other than a vast collection of the most insignificant insects—corruption, not solidity. Liquid assists in polishing steel, until it beams a mirror of brightness; but if not duly wiped away it bites into the steel itself,

and eats into its very substance, in the shape of rust. In like manner has refinement been applied to brighten our middle-class society. It has not been applied wisely, but too freely. It has not been jealously guarded as a might-be dangerous application, and the end is, that the very life of society is daily being consumed by the incrustations it has everywhere deposited.

A very young reader of these pages, if he have walked through life attentively, and have the faculty of minute recollection, cannot fail to have noticed in what an entirely different manner a couple in the middle classes enter the married state now-a-days, when compared with what was the custom a quarter of a century ago. Then, by a wise arrangement, progress, that mighty specific for human happiness and healthful existence, was preserved to matrimonial life ; for housekeeping was commenced advisedly, so to speak, with every necessary, but few of the superfluities, of life, with every comfort, but little or no extravagant display. Extended visiting acquaintance was not looked for ; but the young married man maintained a happy, an economical, and a sterlingly manly home, seeking his highest enjoyment in the quietude of a plain fireside, and his chief company in the society of his wife. As year by year flew by only were the onward sumptuosities and adornments of existence carefully amassed ; so that, as we said, progress was a characteristic of such



domesticity,—steady onward progress ; and it was precisely at that period when the fire of younger love grows colder, and the mind, less self-supportive and concentrated, craves for enlarged society, that the house and its inmates were ready for a more crowded stage.

The evils of the old system we have seen ; that was its good. Pity that, in sweeping away those evils, we have also swept away, even more radically, the good. For now how is it ? Why, a young man must plunge into married life at full gallop ; begin where his father ended. He must have a house replete with elegancies, with plate, pier glasses, pictures, and all the paraphernalia of a drawing-room of fashion ; and he must be prepared to give an expensive entertainment, once or twice a year, to all with whom he is on speaking terms ; or if he will not do this, if he will not be bound down by such conventionalisms, he must submit to sink his status in society, and be considered a plebeian and a boor by his former associates. Hence, at the portal of social life, we have a barrier, compelling, in a majority of cases, two very evil courses—either unjustifiable expenditure and matrimonial thriftlessness, and consequent anxiety and ruin, or celibacy, when, were the laws of society only humanly rational, every qualification is possessed for marriage. Now, connected with marriage there are two men honourable, and two alone—he who, loving and having the wherewithal to maintain her he loves,

and those whom he may have to love, follows his heart's imperial behest implicitly, and marries; and he who, loving, and not having that wherewithal, abides patiently, struggles manfully, and if unsuccessful, dies abiding. But the third man, he who, having ample means to procure every reasonable and solid comfort and enjoyment, and to support in integrity a wife and family, suffers the years to run by, and fritters away his golden era in frivolities or profligacy, because he cannot command the gewgaws and outsides of a fashionable life, sacrifices love and manly truth to purchase, when love and truth alike are dead within him, an aristocratic wedding and a dazzling "At home." Surely, it is not too severe to call that man despicable. What, then, is the tendency of a state of society requiring, *primâ facie*, a great proportion of its votaries so to become despicable?

When that barrier is overstepped, when after long years of bachelorhood, the mosaic-arabesque house has been procured and bedizened, and the united pair sit down together to commence their married co-existence, does the aspect brighten, or is the progress worthy the commencement? Worthy it is, indeed. That which bases itself upon hollowness can never prove a substantial erection; and so, instead of the husband saying, "To live a true life,—to emulate the lives of all the great and true, whose worth has made the earth beautiful for us to live in, to develop ourselves to the full of our capa-

cities, and to teach our children to do the like when we are gone, that is our married duty, O wife, and shall be our married pathway also." Instead of that, the words are thus: "We are married; we have a position to keep—we have not much to keep it upon; the end of our battling must be, therefore, with our five hundred to emulate and keep pace with our neighbour who has eight." And so the race commences. *Cinq-cents* running at the heels of *mille*. *Mille* had fifty at his party last month, shall not *Cinq-cents* scheme and contrive, and even run a little into debt, and have as great a number at his this month? Madame *Mille* gets her millinery at the fashionable extravagant French establishment on the parade or in the square—shall not Madame *Cinq-cents* go there also, even if she hide it from her husband, and pay the pretty little accounts by instalments, stolen from the household expenses from time to time? Madame M. sends her girls to the expensive boarding-school, where they learn to knit anti-macassars, make wax flowers, weave pictures in Berlin wool, and other sedate and womanly necessities; Madame C. C. sets her woman's ingenuity to work—her wife's persuasion and expostulation; and, though the husband begins to have dim visions of the Gazette glimmering before him, the young Demoiselles C. C. go there also. A lady the other day showed me an epergne she had been buying. It was beautiful, with many branches: elegant in form, and costly. Knowing that I had a sort of

contempt for such things when out of keeping with the known position of the owners, she simpered with modest pride, "I think I deserved that; for I and my daughters went without butter and sugar for nearly a year, and did not go to the sea-side in summer, to purchase that." And does not such an incident illustrate the whole system? We will forego butter, sugar, the fresh healthy air of heaven in the summer time; but we must have our epergne. Something like an Irish idiot who used to march the streets with ragged clothes, bare legs and feet, but always with a cast-off military cocked hat, with peacocks' feathers, on his head!

The result of such a state of society, to say the least of it, is very deplorable in a financial point of view: come a little revulsion of trade, and men who should have been in a position to weather it out easily, break like reeds. And why? Because, as at present constituted, society compels all who enter her magic circle, who drink her Circean draughts, to spend to the extent of their income. It is a fact which observation and statistics will bear out, that a vast proportion of men with incomes under a thousand pounds, derived from business or professional exertions, die just solvent: their daughters, educated in affluence, crammed with fripperies, have to become governesses, and the widows are flung upon the charity of what relatives there may be. A man who ensures a thousand or so to his relict, by an Assurance

Office, is deemed the very impersonation of prudence; so low has our idea of prudence fallen. We hear loud complaints now, that there are no large fortunes amassed; it is very evident why. When the outgoings are only just under the incomings, there cannot, of necessity, be much amassing. This, though infinitely the most sordid and least important view of the results of our present social system, is one necessary to be brought prominently forward before a people of merchants, whose merchandize ceases when the amassing of capital becomes extinct.

But deeper, far deeper, than any monetary consideration has the curse we are exploring penetrated: into the very heart and core of social and domestic nobleness has it eaten. Time was when friendship between man and man was the rule, and not, as now, the exception; when a numerous range of acquaintances was not cared for, but a few firm, hearty, long-tried, abiding friends were the society sought for by the majority of men. Then, a man was not gauged by the food he set before his visitors, by the quality and quantity of his wines, but by the warmth and cordiality of his reception, the freedom and frankness of his intercourse. Then, an old friend might call whenever friendship prompted, not cased in formulas, and received in the like, but ingenuously and open-heartedly. Now, alas! friends, in the true sense of that time-hallowed word, are fast becoming rarities; acquaintances, numerous, and

selected for their wealth or connection, not their worth, are their substitutes. He would be deemed a Bæotian indeed who should drop in in an off-hand manner at his friend's house; he must be content with a few widely-separated visits, when he is invited formally to one of those huge mistakes—a modern middle-class party; in whose hot-house atmosphere the hardy plant of Friendship disdains to flourish.

The great fault of the English is their gregariousness. We hunt in packs, and do not understand the strength and the dignity of individualism. The error has long been distinguishable in our politics, and in our miscellaneous business; but prudence and a certain ancient broad-heartedness has, till very lately, preserved our domestic life from its taint. Now, however, the gregariousness has appeared in the party-giving system. It is generally understood that people have no every-day friends, receive nobody to a quiet tea now and then, but that they give an extensive dance-supper once or twice in the season. It is essentially a party-giving age. Once, keeping a gig made a man respectable; now the gig is not required; an annual party is the test substituted. I called these parties huge mistakes, and they are so. View them in whatever light you will, they remain the same false, betinselled absurdities. Even the frequenters and the givers of them see and feel this. Does not our comic literature almost live by them? In every sketch-book and satiric novel, do not incidents abound of

houses being rendered uninhabitable for several days, of beds being pulled down, plate and glass borrowed on all sides, families taking their meals in back pantries, to prepare for one of these same parties? Do not sketches abound also in caustic pictures, of the cant smiles and hollow courtesies bestowed on all visitors alike, on the malicious criticisms of envious matrons, the formal emptiness of the whole affair? And are not these satires felt by all readers to be true? It would, indeed, be difficult to decide what is accomplished by these parties; what end caused them to be given; and what end is gained when they are over. Is it pleasure to the visitors? They know, perhaps, five among fifty, and spend the night, almost continuously, in the dreariest shuffling, lisping the most meaningless common-places to their partners, because mutual ignorance of each other's capacities and tastes effectually prevents any sensible interesting converse. Is it pleasure to the entertainers? I never yet saw any other expression pervade the fair features of the hostess than that of intense weariness and anxiety, broken only by perceptibly forced smiles and cheerfulness. In fact, I have very rarely met with any one, even among the most habituated party-goers, who, on being closely pressed, did not candidly acknowledge that he never experienced any real, substantial, worthy enjoyment in such meetings—who did not admit their absurdity. A flippant lady, once, after confessing her perception of their folly, ha-

zarded the remark, "Nevertheless, I always *enjoy* myself at them;" but when we replied, "Ah! madam, but *ought* you to enjoy yourself at such a consummate emptiness?" she could not, light butterfly though she was, in conscience answer, "Yes." Indeed, but that these gatherings minister to the most general weaknesses and bad qualities of our nature, they would soon speedily disappear. But in quieter and heartier parties, personal decoration, wholesale flattery, and polished formalities have no scope; whereas, in these immense and brilliant assemblies, the clothes we will wear, the songs we will sing, the dances we will shine in, are themes for a week's deliberation: and the ladies, in their bescented pomp, with their many-flounced distended dresses, their jewels and camellias, and the gentlemen, with their brodered fronts and fashionable extravagancies, strut the rooms, self-satisfied, as though they wore tickets on their backs saying, "See what Ganymedes and Hebes the tailor or the milliner can make us!" The canonization and the fostering of the qualities of vanity and jealous rivalry is the sum of this all-dominant ambition, upon whose altar we have offered so much that is great and valuable in us.

But friendship is of little import compared with parental and filial love; and there the prospect is not all satisfactory. There is reason to believe that the relations between child and parent are becoming less intimate, as in fact they must do in such an artificial state of society as ours. A



little while ago, and the ties between them were something strong, active as the pulses themselves : when the rising family sat around the cheering fire, at ease with their parents ; when the sorrows of their youth were poured into the mother's ear ; when the earliest instruction was gleaned from the mother's lips, and when the nightly prayer of infant innocence ascended from the mother's knee. That is growing obsolete. What of the nursery rhymes and stories I know, were sung and told to me by my mother—what of such my friends' children know, I find, are taught them by their nurses. There are things on earth that it is not pardonable should be done by deputy ; and such are the sacred offices of a parent. The heart bleeds, and it must bleed, in very many houses now, to see those sacred offices delegated to hired strangers ; to see the intercourse between child and parent not one of confidence and love, but of cold politeness and reserved fear ; to see the children removed away to some far apartment as a nuisance, necessary but unpleasant, and only permitted the parlour on sufferance, when they are trotted out to exhibit the mamma's taste in dress to an admiring, but inwardly ridiculing, company. And yet this is now becoming a very general case.

Such are the salient features of domestic life in England, as they appear to us. It is deeply and complexly bad. One could understand it if the end for which such sacrifices were made,

such annoyances undergone, such duties forsaken, was something high, or even had the semblance of a high thing. I can imagine a man conceiving such a desire for learning as to over-live his means and harass his mind to procure an abundant supply of literature; I can imagine a man having become so deeply devoted to some philanthropic or religious cause as to mar the comfort of his household and its inmates to advance that cause. Such men I could understand, and should blame with pitying love. But when the end of all is base and paltry, it appears scarcely credible that *men*, eternal souls, children of the Eternal, heirs of heaven, breathing the breath of God, capable of acting the will of God and thinking His inspirations, that they, I say, should undergo what thousands in England do undergo, for such a base and paltry end, and apathy on the subject be maintained in the land. For never let us forget that the end is base. It is base for any man, when there is so much manly work to do; when there are problems without number calling for solution; when there is misery, ignorance, crime, poverty, idleness, and quackery to be found everywhere; when great questions are wanting supporters, emigration questions, education, labour questions; and when the whole universe is commanding every living spirit to work in truth and sincerity;—it is base for any man to expend human thought, time, and care upon anything in itself purely superfluous and frivolous and vain. I am not preaching asceticism;

I do not belong to those intolerant religionists who condemn all gaiety and festivity: I say gaiety is necessary to preserve a healthful mind ; and I do not quarrel with the wealthy man, who can give an assembly without trouble and laborious preparation, who can have a ball with as little distraction of mind as I a quiet tea, that he does give balls and parties ; but I do maintain that the man who is not so situated, as the majority of my readers will be, and who struggles after the same display, making any sacrifices for it, commits a folly approaching very closely to a crime. For we are not here wholly to give parties ; and the highest achievement of human endeavour is *not* to make as brilliant and fashionable a show as your neighbours, upon half what they have ; we are not here to do that. No one will be condemned hereafter for residing in a small house, and eschewing balls. Epergnes, ottomans, chandeliers, pier glasses, and champagne are not necessary to salvation. We are here to look out, as has been shown before, with all our insight, for what it is our duty to do, and with our whole souls to do it, when discovered. Why not then face the thing manfully ? Say at once decidedly,

“If without scheming, and contriving, hampering my movements and harassing my mind, I cannot wear the clothes, give the entertainments, inhabit the house, of my friends around me, I will not seek to do so. If I cannot have banquets without dining

in back rooms, borrowing plate, curtailing my charitable gifts, and book purchases, clearly banquets I have no business to have. In a neat house, with plain, frugal, comfortable, but unostentatious living, I can be true to what I feel to be the truth; can pursue my upward struggle, aye, mount higher than all the Dives around about me; as the dusky, homely lark soars nearer to heaven than the most golden butterfly!"

## CHAPTER III.

### MORALITY.

“Die von herrlichen Häusern eingefassten Strassen werden reinlich gehalten und jedermann beträgt sich daselbst anständig genug ; aber im innerm sieht es öfters um desto wüster aus, und ein glattes Aeussere übertüncht, als ein Schwacher Bewurf, manches morsche Gemäuer.”—GOETHE.

“Of all God's works which do this world adorn,  
There is no one more faire and excellent,  
Than is man's body, both for power and form,  
Whiles it is kept in sober government ;  
But none than it more foul and indecent,  
Distempered by misrule and passions base ;  
It grows a monster, and incontinent  
Doth lose its dignitie and native grace.”—SPENCER.

THERE appears to be a great want, a pressing demand, for the enunciation of a clear and tenable theory of what (to use a term which has grown almost a cant phrase) we call Progress. We have the fact of progression, but it is in our despite mostly, and not with our proper co-operation. There is no vivid perception of its philosophy ; and from a non-understanding of that, the advancement itself is much impeded, and too frequently diverted from its right channel. We are not sufficiently aware of the compound interest ratio in which the onward tide flows ; that there should be no such

thing as rest. We universally regard the first step as the complete journey—are particular and definite, not expansive and catholic. We have small ideas of that tremendous ocean of events and changes surging on, or falling in reflux back, continuous through all ages, and stationary never; the little waves of which, that we are now transacting, being merely, as it were, concatenations in a vast chain binding together remotest centuries, and incomplete, until sin and misery have been annihilated, and the human race merges into the Godhead whence it emanated. That which we depose, we lay on one side as never to be re-employed in any coming time; that which we set up, we establish as everlasting and complete; the simple substitution of a pure right for a manifest wrong. Admitting an unlimited progression and perishableness in all the past, we make exceptions for our own acts, and believe implicitly in the perpetuity of the present. And yet nothing is more certain than that the same tide that now casts up our sublime systems to the surface shall also, sooner or later, suck them back; since nothing human is eternal.

Moreover, we only care for progress at a certain point. For instance, in financial reform, the true basis of the movement should be the payment of no man, save in just proportion to the work he accomplishes; but we hear of no such thing as the ground of argument, and financial reform is only mooted when the system of paying innumer-

able non-workers weighs heavily on the great middle-class purse. Now, if progress have any worthy significance, it must mean the gradual approximation of the thing in progress to the abstract truth, the pure absolute right concerning it. Therefore, to let an evil alone until it becomes glaring and flagrant, and presses inconveniently upon us, and then to qualify it into quiet, and tone it down sufficiently to remove its pressure, and then to allow it to run its own course again, can be only a paltry mockery of progress. We ought to adopt the constant-dropping theory, and not when we have made a small impression upon it proclaim exultantly what we have done, and then cease; but rather to continue our efforts unabated until the whole be worn away.

These thoughts have been forced upon me, contemplating our method of dealing with that greatest of all the night-hags which override humanity—Immorality. Our treatment of it resembles the manner in which a wise man once dealt with a plague of rats that infested his granaries. In a dark hole two of these pests took up their abode, and the man at once admitted their danger and their infinite unpleasantness. He knew, moreover, that in that deep den they would breed and multiply, until all the subterranean portions of his barns were one vast colony of vermin. Did he then take dogs and ferrets, and hunt out the first comers zealously and effectually? Not so; he took no heed of them so long

as they kept out of sight; when they openly showed themselves, he made loud uproars, and hurled stones and staves at them, until they retreated into their dens again; but, once housed in privacy, he ceased to be anxious about them. Now, our efforts against immorality are precisely of a similar character. It would seem that we do not regard immorality as an evil of itself, as a thing to be warred against, and to be reprobated in its minutest appearances; but that we only condemn it and consider it worthy our attacks when it has swollen into a glaring publicity, an overgrown excessive fact. This is unworthy a nation so professedly moral as the English. We ought to know that perfect purity is the only really good state of morals, and that excessive licentiousness is only worse than moderate dissoluteness, in proportion as to have committed ten murders is more atrocious than to have perpetrated one. We ought to know that even if a man maintained an invariable purity, and only occasionally made a loose speech or licentious joke, he would still be a better, a nobler man, were he to battle the thing out to the full, and speak *no* loose words, however seldom. It is not hopeable, it is not possible, that all humanity could so be spotless; but it is possible, and it is our duty that we should perpetually struggle so to become. There are such beings as morally pure men below; if you can be so, why, then, cannot I? The numbers might be swelled by repeated efforts, and surely



to win one soul from the abyss of the polluting maelström would not be too dearly purchased by a year of preaching in pulpit and in book. In a rightly-constituted order of society, personal purity would be constantly on the increase by the repeated accession of individuals reformed. Send ten chaste livers into society, and let them be true to their principles, true in advocacy, true in practice, and in six months you will have twelve. Humanity never will become moral *en masse*, but it would, were the due amount of attention and energy constantly expended on the subject, continually grow more moral by the slow increase of the number of the pure and good. But it is little likely to do so under our present advance-and-retire manner of proceeding.

Thinkers who stand on independent grounds, and see beyond shallow humanitarianism, have always been very sceptical of the "progress of the species" doctrine; because they notice that a young man, on beginning his career, does not start from the point his predecessors fought themselves to, but has to undergo the same experiences and conflicts, and at the end hardly finds himself in advance of them. It is inherent in our nature that, except in rare cases, such should be the lot of the individual man, because wisdom is the slow growth of time, and the more our predecessors have amassed for us, the longer a young man must be in conquering it until it becomes the point from whence he sets out upon his voyage of life.

But it is not a necessity that such should also be the case in social, aggregate reforms, because the two are not analogous, insomuch as the individuals who lead on our social movements and influence the tides of the times have not any fierce experience schooling to go through, but come to it formed and matured, and fully capable to accept and to comprehend completely what has been accomplished beforehand for them. Our fathers' goal must be our starting point, and our goal the starting point of our children, in social reforms, if there is ever to be any such thing as a true progress of society. I am not sanguine that we shall begin that principle, but I do know that in its adoption lies our only hope for such a progress, our only chance for an improved world. Our great question must cease to be, "Have our ancestors and ourselves done sufficient to warrant our ceasing to labour and reposing at ease?" and must be instead, "What remains for us to accomplish?" When an evil parades itself openly to the world, let it be hunted into quietude as quickly as may be; but when so quieted, turn not your back on it for ever, but proceed to root out its solitary lurking dens, and as, one by one, you overthrow these, place them behind you also, as so much marshy quagmire rendered solid land for society to stand upon; and so win more and more until the whole swamp be reclaimed. In such a spirit let us glance over society, to indicate, as regards this matter of morality, where the zealous efforts of the pure

and the true would not be altogether spent in vain.

A little more than a century ago, Mrs. Aphra Behn's scandalous stories were not deemed too gross for the most fastidious lady in the land to read; and up to the dawn of the present century, as far as one can judge from the constantly-increasing supplies of the memoirs and diaries of light noblemen, bed-chamber women, and such like, conversation, scarcely readable in private now, was then suffered, nay admired, in the most select coteries. French licentiousness was everywhere aped, and English history has no such detestable epoch in all its annals as is the eighteenth century, with its loose conversation, literature, and practice. If we have now an error in that respect, it is that we are too prudish. A licentious literature is not tolerated, in whatever guise it may appear; and if licentiousness have not ceased to be, it is considered currently in polite circles to have done so; and certainly it no longer struts daringly abroad. In fact, 1749 and 1849 are the relative extremes of social outward laxity and social outward strictness of morals, so much have we actually effected. The enemy was jauntingly careering on the plain, and our war-cry has scattered them; but whether they have only retreated to thickets and ambuscades, and there even more dangerously point their guns upon us, and seek to waylay us, is the engrossing question now. For it is one thing to have hooted immorality

into concealment, and another to have actually lessened the sum of immorality. Boils, cutaneous blotches, denote inner festering humours, and there are two ways of dealing with them. There is a way of getting them out of sight by the outer application of cosmetics; the present beauty of the complexion is increased by such a process, but the actual health, the ultimate beauty, is by no means benefited. There is also another method of procedure by inward radical treatment, slower in visible operation, perhaps increasing the excrescence for the time being, but it is generally accounted by practitioners as the sounder method. Hence is it asked: have we so driven immorality *in*, to fester even more foully in its hidden channels, or are we more moral in our lives, thoughts, and conversations, individually and nationally, than we were in those days of blatant profligacy? Have we actually increased the amount of personal purity in the country, augmented the gross bulk of British morality, or have we merely, as is feared, succeeded in establishing a dominant show of morality which has small existence in reality?

These are grave questions. The answer is not upon the surface of things, and the fact of there being such questions necessary to be put, and the answer not being self-evidently affirmative, shows of itself what an immense scope yet remains for an apostle of purity among us.

When virtue has grown conventional, when it becomes a mark of good-breeding not to be dis-

solite in society, we must not expect any very healthy energetic morality to exist at all among the men of society ; and we may be prepared to find a far greater amount of empty talk than of stern practice, for the man who appears to be moral because it is fashionable so to appear, will generally be so only when in fashionable places. That such is the case one may soon perceive by regarding the surface of life around us, and noting the delicate rose-pink purity which floats upon it ; and then by going deeper into the particular lives and conversation of the men who form it, and so discovering upon what a quicksand foundation all their etiquette morality is based. I once heard a gentleman, most estimable in every way at the bottom, but spoiled by the conventionalism in which his better nature is choked, who follows the proprieties of society as more sacred than the decalogue, and who wars against George Sand and the French novelists as a moral pestilence, deliver the following beautiful sentiment :—

“Young men,” said he, “will do these things. And so long as they do it *sub rosá*, well and good ; but when they defy society, and expose their conduct openly, *then* it becomes an evil !”

But even that is surpassed by the astounding criticism I also heard a gentleman bring forward, who has attended more balls in one season than many men in their lives, and who moreover is generally an official in fashionable little dilletante charities, and sometimes a churchwarden :—

"The book, I assure you," he remarked, "is shockingly bad. I declare to you that when I have been among women of the town I have seen more modesty than there is in that book!"

And I did not notice that the cool acknowledgment of such company on his part excited surprise, or the faintest reprobation among his compeers.

Another individual of similar etiquette-purity, once, at a large and fashionable party, when after supper the ladies had retired, on being requested to sing, replied in this fashion:—

"If you'll send the ladies to the house-top and lock them up, or, better, send them home altogether, then I'll sing for you, but not without."

Applause from young and old greeted this, and I have heard of its being retailed in fashionable gentlemen's circles as an additional glory to its utterer. Nay, to go further, I know of several individuals, one in particular, whose whole lives have been one good effort for social and political reform, and yet who enjoy even deeper popularity from a far-spread fame as the retailers of indecent stories at their own hospitable tables.

These are but a few cases in point, which I chance to remember; they can be multiplied to any number and grossness by a frequenter of society, and they are fair illustrations of the under-current of that very plausible river of conventional morality which flows on strongly and incessantly, while the poor surface-current scarcely ripples,

and sometimes is even blown backward by the wind. They are adduced to banish the silly gratulations one hears every day about the unsullied spotlessness of our present middle-class society, by reminding male readers, and informing female ones, of the real tone of that society when it flings off its etiquette restraints.

But leaving particular instances, and leaving as well the higher branches of the middle classes, to which they have been confined, let us cast a random glance abroad, and we shall see instantly what an infinitude of social putrefaction is around us. Returning home through our larger towns, late in the evening, the thoughtful traveller does not see that which elevates his estimation of the morality of his townsmen; going to the theatre, he also discovers no signs of a decreasing licentiousness \*;

\* Of all things immorality is the most difficult to estimate by statistics. Some imagine that if you prove a reduction in the number of illegitimate children, you prove increasing morality; but a little thought tells us that, so long as our eyes report great perceptible immorality, such a fact, were it the case, would prove precisely the opposite. I believe, which is more to the purpose, that, as far as can be ascertained, prostitution is found to be on the increase, at a greater ratio than the increase of population. I have been informed so by those who have devoted much thought and observation to that point. And should it not be the case, it is well to remember that, in these factory districts, there is a fearful amount of female laxity, which is of modern growth, and comes not under any such estimates. And if it be said that that concerns the lower classes rather than that to which I am chiefly confining my attention, I would answer that it does to a great extent, but not entirely. I knew a master spinner who offered to a profligate fellow-debauchee

if he listen to the converse of half a dozen average young men, neither utterly depraved, nor yet the exceptions that happily do still exist, for a few minutes, he will probably not find any very scrupulous reverence for chastity, any great immaculateness of wit, or purity of speech; and if it be his lot to attend the dinner of some of the thousand-and-one clubs, cricket, or what not, which abound on all sides, where the attendance is sufficiently numerous to promote excitement, but not numerous enough to engender formality and stiffness, he will find that the immorality demanded by society to be kept from view is only dealt so with, and not, as yet, suppressed or extinguished, as some appear to think, but has a fearful volcanic eruption, a wild reaction, where licence and liberty are given.

Indeed, if we thought of duty more than pleasure, and if, when the gratification of the eye is ministered to, we did not gloss over the evilness of that which feeds it, one would imagine some fast-spreading public amusements give ample evidence of a large amount of light depravity in our present race of amusement-seekers. The stage, for instance. Play-acting, tragedy, rant, bombastic mouthings, are nearly exploded, and most justly; but is it an improved state of things to have, in

to allow him to go through his mill, and take his pick of the females employed there. And there is, alas! no lack of instances of the master, or the master's sons, having other relations with their female hands besides that of employer and employed.



their stead, the ballet? Is it not more moral, more elevating, to hear Hamlet discourse his sublime soliloquies, though never so miserably delivered, than to see a half-naked girl degrade her nature to an applauding audience, and dance a picturesque pollution of her sex? I am not blind to the poetry of motion, and that kind of thing, when it is placed before me; but do not let a fine-sounding sentence hide the actual interpretation of such a feature. What I would say to any man defending the ballet, is simply, would he like to see his sister, or any female friend, so situated? He would scarce deign a reply to such an interrogation; and yet the same God who made his sister and his friend made also the dancer he applauds and scorns: she is a daughter of eternity even as they are, and what is a sin in them is a sin in her.

Again, are those Cider Cellars and Casinos indications of general and advancing purity? Men and women, mutual strangers, meeting amid music and sherry-cobbler drinking, to dance into the midnight hours, though plausibly chatted about, as a gratifying introduction of French gaiety, in popular periodicals, can hardly be regarded, by a true-hearted man, with other than sorrowful regret and almost anger. And to crown the whole, what hidden lesson is contained in those various companies of *posés plastiques*, in many quarters of London, exhibiting to hundreds; "each striving nightly to *outstrip* the others;" and not in London

only, but in all towns sufficiently large to yield a remunerating harvest of vice? What the significance of that Walhalla, as they called it, with its living Godivas, and Ariadnes, and Medicean Venuses, journeying triumphantly from town to town, and drawing together thousands of men, young and old, to see simply—women, in many instances, save a skin-fitting silk garment, totally denuded, posturing themselves in voluptuous groups? Is the taste that is ministered to by such exhibitions (new features since the old Roman Bacchic Orgies and Mediæval Moralities died out) a good and pure taste, or a bad and a dangerous taste?

Indeed all this might be expected from the preceding chapter; whenever artificial unnecessary obstacles are placed in the way of marriage, there appears shortly, as its natural attendant, a general looseness in the habits and amusements of the young men, forced celibacists as they so become. Accordingly, having raised a rather firm barrier against marriage, the results are beginning to be apparent in the amusements of the young men. Hence casinos, ballet-dancing, and *posés plastiques* cease to be mere passing incidents in our age, but form integral portions in a vast system, natural developments of certain ascertained causes, the commencement of a Future, not the ending of a Past.

I have thus endeavoured to bring prominently forward a few salient facts on the subject

in question, in order to show that there is yet such a thing as immorality in England, and to awaken some lethargic slumberers to the consciousness thereof. Certainly, to read our books, and to hear our sermons, the natural inference must be, that what immorality exists here is so insignificant as to be unworthy notice. And the truth indeed is, that they who, in the economy of the nation, are expressly set apart to watch over these things, and to fight an everlasting crusade against them, are unacquainted with the amount of depravity around them, or, at any rate, so ignorant of its details, of the phases it assumes, as to be unfitted for producing any effect. The ministers of religion, by a wise arrangement, are so appointed, and so maintained, as to see nothing of the real secret workings of that life they are called upon to guide and to regenerate; and the consequence is they only form their estimates from glaring palpable results; and so, in the matter of morality, finding that dissoluteness is dethroned from its public social position, they repose upon their oars, and think their labour would be superfluous in that quarter. To do our clerical corregidores justice, when vice does stand upon the house-top and blow its notes of defiance, they are not slow to attack it: "Don Juan" had its opponents among them. But what is to be complained of is, that when it leaves the roof and windows, and goes *into* the house, they are silent, as though the pestilence were not—that while

the first appearance of "Don Juan" was deemed a hydra to be battled with, the incessant circulation of that, and reprints of Little's lucubrations, in all forms and prices, has no significance whatever. For, indeed, the whole subject is a neglected one; and, since the appointed officers are not alive to it, it falls to the non-official observer and censor to send forth a loud cry to all men, that the thing is there, and should have no unmolested habitation in a well-constituted state.

The women of England, precisely the parties most interested in the subject, much twaddle as has been written for them of late, are, like the ministers, by position kept unaware of the actual moral atmosphere now existing. Because the propriety of their homes is maintained, and profligacy stalks not there in flagrant boldness, they fancy all is much the same without. But it is very fitting that the scales should be taken from their eyes, and that, at the risk of shattering unworthy idols, they should be told, that a large majority, it is feared, of husbands, brothers, and sons, when they mingle in the many-pulsed distracted world, speak, and too often act, as they dare not when the firm starlight of woman's pureness shines from her clear bright eye upon them in the sacred precincts of their homes.

It is all the more important that the women of England should have some idea of the prevalence of immorality, and of the curse it ever has been,

and ever must be, to the man and to the nation, because if we are to look to any extraneous power, to anything beyond the arousing of the slumbering divinity within the breast of the man himself, I should say, it must be to the young maidens of our land.

It appears to me that society has a large claim upon them, and a large complaint against them. I am not aware that any great stand for moral rectitude in their lovers is made by the maidens of our times. Nobly preserving the virtue of their sex immaculate, even from a breath of taint, they stop there; and I am not asserting a new fact, when I say that, so far from a stand being made for that quality, a certain amount of jaunty rakishness, a spice of the Lothario, is rather desired than otherwise. It is almost universal, that the *roués* of the town are precisely the men who are never omitted in any invitation list; and to win attention from whom is the chief ambition of the belles. I myself have seen men in our theatres and in our streets, in company discreditable to them one evening, and the next waltzing, or whirling along in the polka, with their arms around the frail waists of ladies to whom, or, at any rate, to whose brothers and fathers, their characters could be no secret, and my mind has gone back from this Christian England to Pagan Rome and the great Virginius, and I have thought that, of the two, it would be healthier, had we fathers who, rather than encourage such spider embraces for

their butterfly daughters, would emulate that Roman.

O fair ladies ! there are brave hearts in England that have been plunged in the lecherous mud-baths of life to the very chin and have not fallen—who have fought, and struggled, and conquered, and preserved their manly purity, as ye your womanly virtue, and have seen themselves passed by and rejected by the divinities they sighed for, while the offscourings of the haunts of dissoluteness were everywhere courted and accepted, until their passionate souls are almost broken, and they are tempted to fight no longer, since they perceive that, to win life's highest blessedness, the surest plan appears to be, not to deserve it, but, on the contrary, to become unworthy it !

Bright erring ones ! if the boasted chastity of your sex mean anything—if it be not a mere outside conventionalism, as there are hopeful men who believe it is not—then it must mean, that ye should be so pure in spirit that the thing that is impure should shrivel into itself at your approach—fly off from you as the impure breath flies off the clear surface of steel. If society is to be expurgated at all, if men are to be reformed, it must be by your refusing to be parties to dissipation, by your shunning the dissipated man. Nay, higher than that, by your insisting upon justice being established between the sexes ; that man shall not make for himself any more a convenient standard of moral laxity, but shall adopt the same

as yourselves, and ultimately, after a firm insistence on your parts, attain to the same chaste rigidity of life.

To all this dissertation I can readily imagine the answer that almost every casual reader would give. It would be, "I admit the fearful amount of immorality prevalent, but you must remember that young men will be young men ; they will sow their wild oats, and you can't prevent it." Now, it is precisely to that system of regarding licentiousness as the nearly universal characteristic of youth,—of speaking of sensuality and general vice as a mere matter of course,—of immorality as a thing that must be,—that I object. We know mankind will never be one great aggregate spotlessness ; but why speak lightly of licentiousness, why treat it as though it were the normal condition of the perfect man, and virtue the abnormal one? We do not do so with lying, stealing, and swindling ; and what man will affirm that any of these, that all together, are as intrinsically evil, as fraught with evils to society in general, as indecency of speech and conduct? The whole array of history, speaking through Greece, Rome, France, Charles II. courts, and George Barnwell ballads, is there to proclaim that, of all the plagues that human sin creates to scourge itself, there is none so paralyzing to the individual body and mind, so disastrous to the national safety, and poisonous to the High and the True in man, as

immorality. Let us try to get that acknowledged, and to see, therefore, that the aspects of morality are those to be most jealously guarded ; to understand that the pure man is the morally true man, and that the immoral man is the abnormal recreant ; to eschew all “sowing wild oats” proverbs, as plausible gilding of intrinsic baseness.

And, as regards the impracticability of reforming mankind *en masse*, it may be said that none but the insanest Utopianists have ever dreamed of accomplishing or attempting such a task. To reform ourselves, and to excite our brethren to do the like, is what a sensible, earnest man will attempt. He will appeal, not to the empty unthinking many, but to the sincere and thoughtful few. He well knows that no man's conflicts and victories are vain, however private he and they may be. And therefore it is that to each individual reader, in closing this subject, I say, “True that thousands are profligate and abandoned, but true also that there is a noble band of better spirits who are not so, who enter into fierce wrestle with the sensual fires within them, and who conquer. Mightest not *thou*, too, do the like, and be in thy turn a conqueror?”



## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE EDUCATION AND POSITION OF WOMAN.

“ A being, breathing thoughtful breath,  
A traveller between life and death ;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill,  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command.”

WORDSWORTH.

“ Why the understanding of women should be lavished upon trifles when nature has made it capable of higher and better things, we profess ourselves not able to understand.”—REV. SYDNEY SMITH.

FROM the time of Mary Wollstonecraft to the present, and more especially since the appearance of George Sand upon the literary stage, so much has been said and written upon the rights and wrongs of woman, and her anomalous position in society, as to render it impossible for that question to be shirked by any person treating of social matters. But there are other reasons which compel me to enter into that peculiar question in this place. The education and the position of woman are intimately bound up with the evils noted in the preceding chapters. The Women of England are, in part, the cause of those evils ; they stand

a firm barrier against the reformation of the same ; and, beyond that, it is more especially to them that we must look for a better state of things, if a better state we are to have at all. I have long since come to the conclusion that, in social and domestic matters, the woman is supreme. Man, a weak imbecile specimen of man even, is great in business and in politics ; in those is his power unquestioned for the most part : but in his home, and in the circle of society wherein he is cast, either by open autocracy or covert diplomacy, his movements and his impulses are controlled and subjugated by the mild influences of his gentle life-companion. I do not say that every man is hen-pecked, in the common acceptance of that term : I do not say that ; but I do say that, by a skilful tact, a smooth, circumnavigating subtilty of persevering resolve, sooner or later, the home becomes what the wife desires it to be, and the tone of the acquaintance kept, what the wife decrees. High-souled, spiritual young men begin a married life determined that it shall be a true and lofty co-existence ; begin in firm determination, lapse imperceptibly into vacillation, and, by a natural transition, into conventionality and spiritual death. In the majority of cases now, no such determined commencement is to be found at all ; and among the minority who do begin in such a frame of mind are those who look not back to Sodom, but proceed unwavering to the end. But out of every ten of the high-souled, nine, I should imagine, re-

enact the old story of the fall of man. The Eve has been educated by the serpent, beguiled by the serpent: the sensuous desires, the outside rosy goldenness of the conventional apple captivates her; she presses it with her winning blandishments upon the Adam; the fruit is devoured; and the avenging angel forthwith is there, with flaming scimitar, to drive forth the fallen from the ethereal Eden of spiritualities and truth into the weed-bearing world of etiquette and falsities. Such a fall is only natural under existing circumstances. Home properly is not the place for conflicts. It should be, and generally will be, even by violation of principle, the repose after the long day's battle. He must be a brave Titanic husband who, after having struggled and laboured in the busy world throughout the day, will have the unresting nobleness to renew the labour and the conflict in his home, by endeavouring to make his wife and the domestic sacraments the solid genuine substantialities they ought to be. Brave indeed, too brave for us to hope that there can be many such. And, strictly speaking, the fault is, not that there should be a scarcity of such a superfluity of valour, but rather that it should be required in order to maintain a high and healthful existence. Married life ought to be the most unbroken co-operation; not a deeper and intenser struggle than the huge battle of the world, but an ideal of what the world itself should be, had we the power to fashion it to our conceptions. In fact, co-operation it ultimately

must become; and as the husband has expended all his energies in earning his subsistence, and, it may be, in bettering society at large during the day, he returns, unfitted for activity, to his home,—desires rest and tranquillity at any cost; and as the wife has had little to occupy her but to conjure up her ideas of life and household economy, and has, therefore, unwearied persevering strength to oppose to his lassitude, the end of it is co-operation, by the husband tacitly submitting himself to the arrangements of the wife. Hence it is at once apparent, that it is to the improved education of woman that we must look for any improvement in domestic life. To devote care and thought upon the development of their minds, to implant within them strong and abiding principles of spirit and of action, to teach them the true destiny of mankind, and the intrinsic meaning and abstract truth of human life,—these are the surest steps for arresting the spread of social morbidness. It may be said, the demand causes the supply; and that we have a race of hollow, high-polished, superficial, dancing, and singing maidens, because such brilliant nonentities captivate the men. I admit the fact that young men do choose their wives by the very qualities which should lead them to scorn and to reject them. But I say that, in the loftier affairs of existence, the supply always creates the demand, and not the contrary. Where was the demand for Christianity when Christ arose and preached it? And yet, when that vast spiritual

supply was there, how soon did the world-wide demand for it appear! In like manner, could there be drafted upon the great marriage-market a supply of real model women, types of the class woman as she came forth from the creative hand of God, there would not be wanting also a demand for the same, and the foundation for a better state of things would be thus at once established. When, therefore, one looks forth upon the dreary plain of existing conventionalism, and marks the gradually-extending swamp of ultra-civilized imbecility, it becomes a matter of vital import to ascertain whether the evil is likely to receive a check by such a supply of genuine women being, in the course of a few years, sent out into society; or whether, as is far more natural, the education bestowed upon the rising generation of young ladies is in strict conformity with the spirit of the age.

After examination sufficient, it is found that there is not a more melancholy mockery on the face of creation than what passes for female education. The education of boys has never been, and is not now, anything very admirable; but it is perfection as compared with that bestowed upon the opposite sex. Boys are not taught much that is solid and enduring; the ideas of existence which might be deeply implanted in the youthful soul, are not implanted; but there is little given that should be withheld. The error is negative; but in the case of girls, it is all positive. Not

only are they not taught all that is desirable, but they are brought up in everything that is undesirable. Not only is no distinct and worthy image placed before them of what they ought to be, but they are ceaselessly reminded of and directed towards precisely what they should not be. And the worst of this is, that it does not so universally apply to the present race of women, the marriageable and married ones of to-day, though to them it does apply most largely, as it applies to those who are now under tuition, who will have to be the wives of a generation from whom much will be required, and the mothers of a generation in whose day the crisis of the middle classes will in all probability occur, and, consequently, upon whom the future of this country so largely depends. By a very freak of destiny so it happens that they who, beyond all other middle-class women that ever lived in this land, require a great and noble education, are receiving the most superficial, flippant, and altogether wretched education that has ever been bestowed upon a race of English maidens. For, not to be blinded by glitter, what is the tendency of all these boarding-schools and foreign governesses? Is it to send out into society a worthier race of women than we see around us now, in the shape of our wives and matrons? Is it to produce a race of women strong in all the mighty characteristics God and Nature have unmistakeably declared to be womanly? Or is it, on the contrary, to create a class of brilliant,

luxurious, gay-coloured butterflies—to produce a race of nondescripts, such as are now beginning to appear in society : accomplished, yet ignorant; fashionable, yet vulgar to the core; eye-dazzling, but heart-sickening; a race who are entitled to the name of “fine girl,” or “elegant creature,” but who can never, without mockery, bear the hallowed name of woman? The question is worth an answer—let us try to give it.

I am not going to examine minute forms of instruction, and to quarrel with the details of the information that is implanted in the minds of young girls at present. I consider them to be the means employed to an end; and it will therefore be the safer and the more proper plan to endeavour to ascertain the end that is in view in the employment of those means. For, let us remember, education is not the mere stereotyping of a few barren facts into the memory, but a greater and more elevated task. It matters little whether I know anything or nothing if what I do know is like so much sunk capital, unavailable and useless. What better is the boy for all his learning, if at the end he has only acquired the salient features of ancient, mediæval, and modern history, and has not therefrom been instructed to shape together for himself an accurate idea of what the world and the course of nature has been, and, from inference, has yet to be? Education properly means the preparing of the young adventurer for the hazardous conflict of existence, the placing before him, clearly

and vividly, what that conflict has been to others, and what it should be to him, and the teaching him in what manner a true warrior of the Eternal will deport himself; so that when the youth or maiden from the hands of the preceptors go forth upon life, they may have distinct and definite conceptions of what that life actually is, and correct ideas of what are their destinies and duties. Now, viewing education in such a light, when I turn and put to the scheming mammas, the formidable boarding-school mistresses, and the accomplished governesses, a question like the following, what satisfactory answer can possibly be given? I ask them this:—

“You take young maidens, and exclude them in such a labyrinth of precautions and rules of decorum from the outer world, that a certain prurient curiosity as to *why* they are so excluded is frequently engendered; for several years you so exclude them, and it is generally understood that you are educating them; then suddenly all the barriers are withdrawn, the young girls are placed face to face with the great world, they are educated and finished, as it is termed, and ready on the spot to marry and begin the tragedy of life! Give an account of your stewardship, and say in what manner have they been fitted for that tragedy; upon what received ideas of the universe and of existence have you based the education you have given; what strength have you infused into their souls for the struggles, the



temptations, and the trials they must encounter ; what belief have you established in their breasts, as to the object of their appearance upon earth, and their eternal descent and heirship?"

The reply to these interrogations must be to the effect that, as far as any coherent design is traceable in the prevailing and extending system of education, it has a threefold object, endeavouring first to develop the proper qualities of woman's nature, to teach her what she should *be* ; to instruct as to *how* she is to be it, or, in other words, to lay the law of life before her ; and lastly, to convey an idea of the proper aim of womanly effort and the means to attain and accomplish it.

With regard to qualities, our education system starts upon the principle that Frivolity and Vanity are woman's natural endowments and her natural element. As plainly as daily practice can assert anything is it asserted, that frivolity and vanity are a natural unblameable atmosphere for her ; and as plainly also as daily practice can manifest it is it shown, that a great proportion of the energies of tuition are devoted to a due development of those twin qualities, and the smoothing of them into graceful matters of course. This is no exaggeration. A young girl is taken, and certain things are sedulously set before her as accomplishments necessary to make her a perfect woman ; and as everything of a more enduring, more elevated character is withheld, and as it is distinctly conveyed to her that

these accomplishments, when acquired, constitute all that is requisite for her in society, it follows, as a certainty, that if these things be not in themselves great and worthy acquirements, the end of such an education is the canonization of inanity. To sing creditably a few dashing Italian airs, to lisp a little French, to have a certain intimacy with select dillettante literature, to dance gracefully, to draw and paint to a small extent, to make impracticable music-stools and ottomans in Berlin wool work, and to weave, knit, net, knot, or crochet endless anti-macassars and doylies—these are the sum total of what the rising generation of young ladies is being taught as their occupations in life. Now, these are one and all, in themselves, good ; and when they are made purely secondary matters in education, and encouraged only as a relief from heavier labours, they constitute graceful additions to a woman's endowments. But, unfortunately, they are now made primary requisites, instead of non-important extras ; and it is the test of a well-educated maiden, not that she can discharge some true and useful offices in life, but that she possesses a large amount of that glittering sciolism of accomplishment. To have our English ladies polished and elegant ; to let all, whose circumstances do not call upon them for sterner work, have as much of this brilliant ornament as their opportunities will allow, so long as it is regarded as mere polish, is desirable indeed. But to insist upon it ; to make

it a necessity; to maintain that it is the substance, and not the mere superficial polish; to demand the gold lace, and to care nothing whether the garment it is attached to be ragged and rotten, or whole and sound; to regard it as the staple of education to be given, whether anything nobler be or be not—that is essentially to assert that frippery, frivolity, and emptiness are the natural elements of woman's life, and thereby to strike at once at the roots of domestic comfort, integrity, and social strength. For it is a truth in education, as in everything else, that whenever that which is not in itself particularly useful and substantially a fact, displaces or is made more prominent than that which is, the result must ultimately prove pernicious to the well-being of society. In occupation and employment there are but two practical parts: the one is the purely material and utilitarian provision for bodily comfort; and the other the ethereal and ideal, reduced to a harmonious realization in a life spiritually true. All between is false and worthless, considered as employment. Fifty years ago, and the occupation of middle-class ladies was publicly and privately understood to be useful household labours. The making of pies, shirts, stockings, and what not, was deemed to be, and calculated as, her proper employment; and the education then given was of the baser kind of the two facts—that of the materially true. With such women for wives and daughters, society might be gross and heavy, but it could never be otherwise

than safe and healthy ; for it was noble from its utility, and from the solid comforts it showered on every side. Its evil was, that it made a lady too much of a domestic servant ; caused her to degenerate into a mixture of a housemaid and wet-nurse. Therefore, to have forced somewhat of the high spirituality of the immortal female soul into that honest, generous, housewife education ; to have taught her that she was not here only to bear children and superintend household arrangements, but that while the exigencies of the day were for her to execute, she was also a child of the Eternal, watched over by the guardian lights of heaven, endowed with a creative mind, and a soul vivified by the breath of God ; that would have been to perfect the old *régime*. But the genius of the age is not one calculated to beautify and perfect a material fact, by blending with it everlasting spiritual facts ; more in keeping is what it has accomplished, or is fast accomplishing : to annihilate the useful without increasing the spiritual, and to place the education of woman, as far as it relates to occupation, in the between region of rose-pink vapour and vacuity.

The other quality I mentioned as being developed as a natural and encourageable part of our composition, was vanity—vanity in carriage and in costume. Here, I believe, the blame to be attached to the education system is far less positive than the other instance. The admitted and encouraged vanity of woman is one of those world-old anomalies

which belong more to her position than her education; and the evil of the present system is, that it boldly bases upon the old error, and pushes the anomaly still farther into an extreme. Instead of asserting to the young novices in life that to bestow human care, lavish human intellect and God's time, upon the decoration of the body and the enhancement of the outer blandishments beyond what neatness and cleanliness require, is to misuse care, intellect, and time,—the epicureanism of the toilet, the patient study of costumial variety and display, as of the revelations of a new-sent prophet, is openly accepted as one of the most important female duties, and the primary requisite for a finished woman. No sensible man would admire a slattern; and few would admire a wife or sister who appeared before them, neat and clean it might be, but neat and clean after the model of a charwoman. So long as the Creator of mankind has seen good to bestow on woman her fair form and features, it is ungrateful to his beneficence not to robe that form in suitable apparel; but let it also be remembered, that it is still greater ingratitude when she suffers the high intellect He has given her to be frittered away on gewgaws, the dignity of the human mind to be outraged by that ever-present matter-of-course vanity, he who has been much in woman's society will oftentimes have ridiculed or mourned. Wherefore should there be so glaring a difference between the sexes in this matter? Why

teach a boy nothing beyond mere cleanliness, as regards dress, and make it at the same time a never-ending study for a girl? How solve the following enigmatical fact? In passing through any of our fashionable promenades, you will see, at the furthest, three or four men strutting along with the unmistakeable impress upon them that they are engrossed with the clothes they wear, and the elegance of their *tout ensemble*; but such beings you scorn at once, and the ladies with you, as fools and fops, unworthy the name of man. But in the same place *every* lady you behold will be a female fop, so to speak—will be seen bedizened with all the richest and choicest productions of the dress-maker, with her figure distorted into a direct antipodes to the Medicean Venus (which antipodes is society's ideal of female form), floating along like a swan, in conscious grandeur, glancing sideways as though saluting the passers-by with "Am I not beautiful in figure and in dress?" The same thing is repeated in every ball-room and assembly of any kind, where, indeed, what are generally termed elegancies are but the same spiritual vanity elegantly expressed. And yet we do not at once dismiss these fair creatures as conceited fops, unworthy the name of woman. Enchanted swains crowd round them, as round radiant birds of Paradise and gay-plumed peacocks, admiring the pride of the bird and the glory of the plumage. Nevertheless, one would imagine that if it be base and despicable in a man

to engross himself with such outside follies, it is, at any rate, proportionately so in a woman; that if he has need to be ashamed when fallen into such weakness, it might also cause her a blush.

As was said, this anomaly, this sad mistake, in female education is not a new feature, as is the other of frivolity and vanity; but, to say the least, the present system has the merit of going into it more elaborately, more in detail, and recognising it more fully and more practically. The result of the two is simply this. It is a philosophic truth, that between the mind and the objects and studies it dwells among, a transmigration of nature takes place. Thus, a girl who has been occupied with nothing higher than an opera piece, etiquette laws, and new crochet patterns, will have unquestionably an anti-macassar mind; and when from such a fashionable education she emerges into open life, the world will in her vision infallibly appear in no other loftier light than that of a butterfly, dancing, and Italian singing world, and wax-flower universe!

For a young maiden launching forth upon life with such a gingerbread conception of all around her, it would be a strange inconsistency if the laws she was to guide herself by were not in strict keeping with that conception. And modern education takes ample care that no such inconsistency shall be perpetrated. Above all laws, human and divine, it sets up the decalogue of society—the proprieties—and burns them ineffaceably into her mind and memory, until they become a portion of

her being. The proprieties are to a woman's life what the unities are to the drama: the swaddling bands and prison bars of nature. . Everything that is gushing like a fresh fountain from a rock-cleft in the hill, everything that is spontaneously natural, impulsive, and joyous, is repressed and strangled, not because it is evil, but because the proprieties demand a calm unruffled placidity of bearing. A girl may not look behind her, nor run, nor conduct herself with that artless purity of demeanour so natural to her sex, and which is at once its own apotheosis and defence, for no other reason than that the proprieties so command; though why or from what authority they so command, is not apparent. It is astonishing with what blind obedience women conform to these same proprieties, as though they were the undeniable law of destiny itself, not to be doubted of or questioned. With what intensity they detest the women or the men who only conform to them as much as they see good to do, and ridicule and repudiate the remainder; with what tenacity these laws have interpenetrated their nature, until everything in the wide world is seen through the coloured glasses of the proprieties! In the great names of history women have only an eye for the unique: the Cromwells, Mahomets, George Foxes, Peters, Fredericks, very rarely are regarded with anything but detestation; the Grandisons, the neat, trim, polished men of proprieties and courtliness alone enlist their admiration. In the life around us



is the same narrow effeminacy, the same eye for the standard gauge of etiquette, and the measuring of all men thereby. With extremes of any kind, fashionably-educated young ladies have no sympathy. The aristocratic well-bred Tory, the mild precise Whig, are their idols in politics ; the fierce Radical, the red-hot earnest Chartist, are not considered altogether human ; and in religion it is not going too far to say, that they are taught God's laws, not in their fulness, and as laws incalculably higher than any edicts of society, (else where would be the proprieties ?) but as much of them as is of the same washed-out, proper character, and as forms an item in the code of the proprieties, which embraces religion, and which is the ultimate, highest law of all. Hence it is a tender orthodoxy, a sentimental Evangelicism, a decrepit Puseyism that women affect. The mighty torrent of overflowing religious zeal and glowing devotion, which catches up the soul into the seventh heaven of transportive joy, and fires the will to a tremendous unceasing life-struggle, is unknown to their category, repulsive, odious.

Such is the intrinsic meaning of the law that is placed in the hands of our maidens on commencing life ; and so incessantly, so perseveringly, so effectually, has the unquestionable authority of that law been enforced, that few indeed of our women but commence life its devoted followers and believers, and are found, as a natural consequence, to be the

stronghold of class prejudice, empty pride, and foolish display, while men and causes, never intended to be estimated by a lower measure than that of absolute and eternal truth, are despised and rejected, and maddened into despair, because too abrupt and herculean for the Grandison mould; and womankind, mankind, the world, religion, and God, are all approved or rejected as they are conformable to the statutes of etiquette, to the proprieties and formulas of the world of ton.

Having thus, after its own fashion, developed the woman's qualities, and implanted the sacred law of life in her mind, the educators thus address her:—"The end and consummation of your existence is to be married; look, therefore, incessantly forth into society, and select. A *man* is not necessary, not desirable; a good match is the object of a pure ambition. The law we have given you will aid that selection. Whoso gathers round him the votaries of the proprieties, himself observing them, is the creature upon whom to fix your choice. Or it may be better merely to employ your wiles of decoy and your manifold allurements at random, and then, when one by one the birds of marriage are attracted to you, guided by the great infallible test of etiquette, you drive back the rough eagles and homely redbreasts, and choose the most golden and the softest-nested finch. In either case, the process is the same: to smile, dress, sing, and dance, until the unctuous bird-lime secure its prey, and so the end of your

earthly mission be accomplished!" With this the novice is thrust out into society, and the education of the maiden is completed.

This is no exaggeration, no florid, rambling painting of the matter. Dive to the bottom of the significance of the movement, strip the question of all its plausibilities and glittering superficial speciosities, and it will be found that I have given the net result of the education of a great majority of middle-class women at this moment; and of what, carried to still worse extremes, seems probable to become the female education universal in society. Meannesses and frivolities to be the natural occupation and element of woman—the proprieties, the canons of etiquette, the sublimest law the universe contains—and marriage with whoever singing, dancing, and proud-robed vanity can captivate, the ultimatum of the female destiny—that is the practical sum and substance of it all.

Are we pagans, one is tempted to exclaim, that deny the immortality of the soul? Or demi-pagans that shut out immortality from the fairer and more beautiful half of humanity? On no other supposition can we comprehend it. Unless we are prepared to admit one of those two principles, we cannot, in consistency, tolerate the extension of the present paltry, yet fearful, system. It is not merely diseased, but rotten from the root upward: and a new plant entirely, springing from healthier, diviner roots, is the thing needed; is the only means hopeable, the only means possible, for arrest-

ing the impending ruin of our domestic stability. We must make the education of our women the exact converse of what it at present is seen to be. If it be that the weakness of the feminine temperament is a tendency to littleness, emptiness, display, and the prejudices of fashion and conventionality, let us no longer take those as the proper basis of an educational development and work accordingly, but rather so constitute our system of culture that it may be what indeed education and culture must be, to be worthy the name—a fortifying of the mind and spirit to resist that tendency, to extinguish it, and rise superior to it. Let it be once for all authoritatively given out, received, and acted upon, that woman is an everlasting being, a daughter of God Almighty, a descendant of the great past, a heiress of the greater future—immortality. Let us understand that she is ever in that high spiritual relation to time, eternity, and the universe that we suppose man to be ; that to her, also, the hard rock, the bleak morass, the fruitful harvest lands, have voices ; that to her the sun, rising fresh with light from the presence of the Maker, brings a daily lesson, and the moon and stars repeat incessantly their nightly and unvarying tale ; that to her, in fact, the mighty anthems of creation are for ever being sung ; and let her education, therefore, build itself in this ; and its end and effort be to make her, in her relations with nature and mankind around her, and the heavens and God above her, worthy of her sublime

heritage and destiny. Let her be taught what is noble and desirable on earth; what is to be cared for, struggled for, and maintained; what is to be considered unimportant and unworthy of thought: let her be distinctly told that anti-macassars, Brussels carpets, epergnes, polka-dancing, and opera-singing, are not, of necessity, a part of life; that they are mere ornamental additions, pardonable or unpardonable, as the case may be; that they never can be auxiliaries to nobleness of life, but that they may be the producers of a degenerate existence, and the causes of spiritual disease and death; that they are to be assumed, when they come, as easy natural acquirements, in perfect keeping with her means and position, only to be there when they fill what would otherwise be vacancy, never when any solid thing is sacrificed and banished to make way for them; to be fought for in no instance, to be won without a care, and relinquished without a sigh. Further than that, let her know that the loftiest code is not the proprieties and the laws of etiquette; that a man may systematically break them, and yet be a brave and true man to the full; that life must never be estimated or governed by them; that, in short, the only absolute law from which is no appeal, and which it is worthy the human race to obey and follow, is the Bible of the universe, the everlasting decrees of God.

And as regards the end of her being, we will not quarrel if, as far as her maiden life is con-

cerned, it be considered as marriage. Only let her be duly instructed as to the real meaning and nature of marriage—the gauge whereby to select her husband, and the means to bring that consummation to pass. Marriage, let her feel, is not the church ceremony, but a deeper union solemnized in a holier sanctuary; it is not the bare possession of a house wherein a couple set themselves to make a sumptuous show, give parties, and breed children, but the harmonious fusion of two equal imperfect portions to constitute a perfect whole—generous and mutual self-sacrifice, and earnest unflagging co-endeavour after the Abiding, the Pure, the Spiritual, and the True. Marriage once regarded in this, its proper light, and it will at once be seen that singing, dancing, and elaborate costuming are not the proper methods for bringing it to pass; that the man who can be won by melodious quavers, graceful polka movements, and showy plumage, is never worth the winning.

On an education getting abroad founded upon and guided by some such principles as these, much of the social future of this country depends. Cannot the reader perceive how very intimately the present system is connected with the domestic evil tendencies the first chapter of this book endeavoured to expose? So long as women are educated by this system—so long as they are reared and developed in superficialities, vacuities, and outside display—so long must we expect that the domestic tendencies will be, as we found them,

after the shows and gewgaws of the world. So long as the proprieties are preached as the highest law, and a "good match" considered the ultimatum of existence, so long must we expect parental love to be an outside thing of propriety, and the social relations with mankind a genteel burlesque of friendship. The reformation, therefore, of female education in this country, little noise as it makes, and little attention as it attracts, is one of the most important questions of the times.

As the education of woman is bound up with the domestic evils of the first chapter, so is her anomalous position with the immorality of the second. This view was intimated at the conclusion of that chapter, and I purpose now to consider it more at full.

The treatment of woman by man, which in reality is what is meant by her position in society, is a subject upon which silence is preserved by the tacit consent of all men. Like the corpse of the victim to the murderer, it is a spectacle they do not care to face. Once set yourself in candour and in clear-sightedness to probe it to the full, and there will arise such a long-accumulating, still-increasing catalogue of brutal arrogance, selfishness, and cruelly-refined tyranny, as almost to scare you from further contemplation; as the putrid body revolts the young dissector. But the truth must never be sacrificed to sentimentality and nervous squeamishness; and the social diag-

nostician must give out his full report, even though it be, as in this instance it is, the pronouncing of a wholesale condemnation of his sex, the writing of a fiery "*Mene, Mene,*" against the entire race of men.

Into the minutiae of the matter I must not enter. How women are won by lies, maintained in quiet by fraud and deceit, or open autocracy; how the lone lovely wife spends her long evenings in solitude, while the husband, good convivial soul as he is, riots it away at his club; and numerous other little inhumanities,—may be left to one of our few true speakers, the nineteenth-century compound of Sterne, Fielding, and Swift; to his honour be it said, that never, whether in light contributions to our Charivari, or elaborated in his serial romances, does he omit an opportunity, to set forth and to hold up to its merited opprobrium, the enormities of man's domestic bearings to the fairer sex. I must content myself with a broad brief glance at a few salient incongruities.

There is nothing more utterly fallacious than the prevailing notion of the improved position of woman in her connection with man and society. Short-sighted enthusiasts look back to more or less remote periods, and discover woman as a tent-bearer, a half beast of burden; and then, when they turn to the present, and find her as she is, they raise a loud cry of what Christianity and modern civilization have done for woman. Now, I deny that it has done anything more than change



the phasis of injustice under which she has so long been writhing. It is forgotten what man was in the days when she was as a common drudge. Say that she no longer is so; but do men, now-a-days, lead a nomadic life, clad in skins, hunting all the day, and but one remove above irrational animals? In that era of barbarity, men and women were *alike* roughly treated, by themselves, each other, and by Nature; and if the advancement of the state of womankind has been marvellous, let us not ascribe it to an improved estimation and treatment, but rather to a social advancement and civilization common to both. If anything, the treatment of woman is relatively worse. For in the barbaric periods man was, to an extent, pure in his morals, ungregarious in his desires, and enjoyed what comforts his rude hut afforded, in the company of his wife, after the hunting and the toil were ended; at least so was it with the great Teutonic race—our ancestors. We know that a state of moral rectitude was among them, unequalled by their descendants in any succeeding age: seduction and adultery were punished by death, and were of but rare occurrence; and as far as we can gain an idea of their married life, it was, when compared as to time and outward refinement, infinitely nobler than that of the present age. Civilization, refinements of all kinds, culture of body and mind, have poured on incessantly since then, and borne along with them the human race. The condition and

position of both the sexes have, side by side, been softened and ameliorated ; with this difference, however, that man has asserted for himself a laxity of conduct, has weakened the ties of home and of married life as regards himself, while, as relates to woman, all the stringencies, severities, and ascetic purities are maintained in the same force, and to the same extent, as when she was an ill-clad, ill-fed, semi-barbarous nomad. And thus we perceive that not only are noisy boastings of the improved position of woman fallacious, as I said, but that they are directly contrary to the truth. The fact being that, speaking relatively, the unjust differences between the sexes are now more weighty and more pernicious than they have been in any preceding epoch of the Teutonic history.

Mankind is well aware of this, and accordingly strives to blind the injured party by an elaborate system of bribery : what we call gallantry is nothing more nor less than so much palaver ; cheating womankind, by a semblance of giving her her honourable place in society. We have all seen many times how, when a wilful child has been seized with a vehement desire for something really valuable, a gold watch, for instance, its parents have skilfully contrived to silence and gratify it, by giving, in its stead, some intrinsically useless article,—a piece of tinsel, or some gilded gingerbread ; such is precisely the case in our treatment of woman ; we say to her, you have

rights, undeniable and clear—right to be on a perfect equality with us, to be governed in everything by the same laws, and gauged and judged by the same standard; but to give you those rights would either disarrange society or restrict our pleasures and profligacies; maintain therefore, as heretofore, silence about your rights, and, in return, you shall be called the “soul of society”—heads shall be uncovered to you, little presents of gowns and gloves shall be made to you, and all men compelled to address you in a senseless, unmeaning oiliness of tone and matter, as an especial approximation to your characters and tastes! And womankind prefers being this little pewter Pagod in the temple of fashion to being in fulness and in reality a woman in the giant temple of God; and so the gilded gingerbread is accepted, and solid gold foregone.

But there is one portion of this quiescently ratified agreement which is too glaringly unjust long to remain in its security, and too fraught with evils to society to be omitted here; nay, it was for that one feature only that this topic was entered upon at all: I allude, first, to the assumed frailty of woman; and secondly, to the widely differing moral codes we establish between the sexes.

For the last hundred years our literature has incessantly been hurling anathemas at the instability of female virtue, until even the ladies themselves have been stormed into admitting and

believing it ; and I know that among men there is a very vulgar, but a very prevalent idea of the impossibility of an indomitable chastity—of the ease wherewith the strongest vestal may be made to fall. “Frailty, thy name is woman,” is a sentiment any dissipated coxcomb thinks himself perfectly at liberty to use as an unquestionable aphorism. And yet, physiologically and statistically, it is false. Physiologically speaking, there is no more sensual tendency in woman than in man ; statistically, let us examine the matter a little. Given one hundred young men, and given one thousand maidens, all in respectable station ; out of the former, at the least eighty will be more or less immoral livers for a period ; out of the latter, perhaps two or three, sorely tried and tempted as the former were not, may fall, after conflicts, and prayers, and convulsive sobbings the others were strangers to. On which side, therefore, lies the frailty ? Further, frailty in that sense means, to speak plainly, illicit love—a crime which a woman could hardly be guilty of without a participator ; if, then, to participate in that is to be frail, it follows that each is frail : it follows beyond that, that since, upon a moderate calculation, to one abandoned woman, there are one hundred licentious men, that there are more “frail” men than women, and, consequently, that the libellous proverb should be exactly reversed.

But it would seem that what is wrong in one

sex is hardly so in the other. We, the stronger sex, have had the framing of the world's laws, and we have framed them very comfortably for ourselves, especially as regards morality. While the slightest laxity of conduct irrevocably damns the fame and worldly prospects of a woman, we have so arranged it, that licence of all kinds is permitted to man ; and he mixes, as a natural thing, in the extravagancies and excesses of a loose life, and counts it nothing, at the same time looking for the purity of a Diana in his sister and his wife. At a certain age a young man acquires irregular habits, is dissipated ; it is thought little of by society, by his friends ; he is " sowing his wild oats," and will be all the better for it by and by ; but he has a sister, let us say, who, in walking the streets, carries herself rather jauntily, and she is at once known through the neighbourhood as giddy, and looked at askant by society in general ; perhaps she becomes, after a fearful resisting struggle, a novice in the guilt whereof her brother is an *habitué*. And what is the ending of it all ? Why, the brother maintains his position, his friends, his peace at home, his share in the paternal fortune, vicious *habitué* though he be ; but the poor novice is branded with the ineffaceable and damning name of prostitute,—is cast forth into the unknown world, to live by vice or to die by crime ! God forgive us ! Is this Gehenna, and are we lost wretches under the rule of demons, or is it a Christian land, where

men believe in God and an Evangel of light and love?

There have been no lack of female souls who have seen into this injustice, and who, in their books and in their lives, have flung up an indignant protest against it. Latterly they have multiplied, and with George Sand for their Penthesilea, are, in all manner of shapes, denouncing the iniquitous treatment of woman. But, alas! all who have yet spoken seek to right woman at the cost of social purity, at the expense of the nobility of the human family. They wish to reform the evil by making it a far fouler one. They seek, in a word, for woman the licence man at present claims and takes. With such a movement what true heart will sympathise? When half the human race arise and say, that it is their right to become profligate and immoral if they feel inclined, all good spirits will pray that their rights may never be obtained. Better that half the world live under injustice than that justice be purchased by positive depravity. Justice must be established between the sexes if society is not to perish of corruption; but it must begin from loftier data, and guide itself by purer loadstars. The present strictness of female morals must be considered the proper state, and justice must be established, not by degrading woman to man's level, but by dragging man up from the pits of pollution wherein he flounders into the ethereal atmosphere of womanly purity. Perfect purity we

must understand to be the legitimate healthy condition of humanity at large, departure from it to be the same crime in man as in woman; but the alteration not to come by a diminished reprobation of her delinquency, but by applying that reprobation in all its severity to the delinquent man. Were the women of England to make a proud stand for justice on grounds like these, and say that whenever they could discover the licentious man they would repudiate and scout him utterly, then all pure and elevated men would rally round them, fresh life would be infused into the debilitated social frame, and immoral manifestations receive a check, which otherwise will go on and multiply.

#### POSTSCRIPT.

At the same time, for humanity's sake and Christianity's sake, even were the moral regulations between the sexes equal and just, the present treatment of the seduced should be in all possible quarters denounced and discontinued. To say to one fallen from a moment's intense temptation and temperamental weakness, you shall be a castaway, and a degraded tabooed being unto death—your first weakness shall be unforgiven, and shall compel incessant sin—is disgraceful and damnable in any state of society whatsoever. There is a fine distinction between the maiden who submits to the consummation before

the ceremony, and her who systematically consents to lend out her body for a consideration. But in such a state of society as is ours at present, to tolerate and practise any such treatment is doubly damnable, unjust, and detestable in its every aspect. It is as though society said, "We will make you fall by every indirect means we possess, but we will show no mercy when you have fallen." Society places all manner of barriers in the way of marriage; society represses all natural emotions of the heart in matters of love; society preaches the lawfulness of ceremonialized cohabitation without love; and if, after all this, the God-implanted nature of the woman rise up in rebellion against it all, overleap the meaningless barrier, seek in love the outlet for natural emotion denied in every other channel, conclude that if ceremonialized cohabitation without love be lawful, unceremonialized, yet with intense love, is doubly lawful, and so acts socially imprudently, and falls—that society should then punish what itself has nursed and created, is a wild anomaly of injustice, and has been reserved for this land and for this era to present for a spectacle to God and man.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE ARISTOCRACY OF MAMMON.—MAMMON WORSHIP.

“The world dishonours its workmen, stones its prophets, crucifies its Saviour, *but bows its neck before wealth, however won*, and shouts, till the welkin ring again, long live Violence and Fraud.”

THEODORE PARKER.

“What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these, *Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.*”

TENNYSON.

THE remarks upon progress, wherewith the chapter on Morality was commenced, apply with no less force to the subject selected for present consideration. In those remarks I endeavoured to make it appear, that very frequently what we so sanguinely imagine to be a *bonâ fide* advance, is in reality merely an exchange of evils—a shifting of the position, but without any release from the Circean circle in which society is spell-bound. And if we once set ourselves to plunge, unprejudiced and open to conviction, into the great question of aristocracy in this country, we shall find that such observations exactly adapt themselves to what we have accomplished in that matter.

Taking up, the other day, a journal of some influence, I lighted upon an article on this very

subject—one of those mighty trumpetings of the nineteenth century which are an everlasting reserved fund to fall back upon, whenever definite questions are exhausted. The writer was reveling in ecstasies of delight at our having well nigh overthrown all aristocracy. The repeal of the Corn Laws was, he said, the death-blow to the supremacy of the aristocratic spirit in this nation. The astute gentleman could not apparently conceive of any other aristocracy than a House of Lords' peerage; and when, therefore, he had traced the gradual decline of the influence of that house in its own domain, and also in the Commons, until it has become the mockery we perceive it at present to be, he struck up a loud jubilee for so cheering a victory, proclaiming, inferentially if not in plain words, that as regards the aristocratic element among us, progress has attained its goal.

From such a conclusion I must altogether dissent; and, as the grounds of that dissent cannot be too well established, will proceed to argue out my meaning in so dissenting.

The evil of the aristocracy reported to be fallen, or at least falling, must not be considered in a legislative point of view. Undoubtedly it is an evil that any class of men should possess a privilege, by reason of birth alone, to thwart the wishes and force the wills of the masses of the people; but such an evil, of itself, might have but few deleterious effects on the social condition, and

a nation might go on from strength to strength incessantly, with that evil in active play in her legislature ; while, on the other hand, it never could be ruined merely by the existence of such a legislative defect. It will be necessary, therefore, to consider what aristocracy really signifies, as popularly understood ; in what manner it is an evil, and what the true end of all progression, as relates to it, may be.

If we take the derivative meaning of aristocracy, it will mean the best men of the nation—the great few, chosen and set apart from the mediocre many. But such a meaning has now become an exploded farce, believed in by none ; and another interpretation of the word must be sought for in the common conception of an aristocracy, as it exists in the minds of men in general. I shall not be far in error if I define it as the assumption of a distinct higher place in society by a clique of men, which is acknowledged by their fellow-men ; as the assumption on the part of the few of a right to a haughty and cold bearing in their relations with the many. In a word, an aristocracy may be termed, a class of men licensed by society to be proud.

The evil of such an aristocracy may be twofold. First, all pride is an evil ; and therefore to remove a class of men to a distinct position from their fellows, and so to place a barrier of prejudice and pride between man and man, for whatever reason, is a step to be reprobated. Secondly, the ill

effects of an aristocracy will be greater or less, in proportion as they are elevated to their position for high and true qualifications, or for low, sordid, false, and immoral ones. A clique of men, really composed of the best, of the wisest, and bravest of the people, even though slavishly looked up to by the masses, and themselves overweening in their carriage, would be an aristocracy you would think twice before you swept away. But an aristocracy *not* of the best and wisest, *not* selected from any known goodness they possess, but chosen entirely from qualifications which are not noble or true, taking the high place vauntingly, when the lowest caves of penitence and reformation were their just sphere—such an aristocracy is an anomaly so tremendous, that its existence might almost be questioned in any country professing to be Christian and civilized\*. And yet such is a correct analysis and definition of our aristocracy as it has existed, and does exist, among us.

What, therefore, is the true spirit of progression and its ultimate end as regards aristocracy? It is the constant assertion of the truth, that the arrogant and unbending assumption of superiority by one human being over another, by one class over their fellows, is hostile to the primal laws of nature,

\* This must not be understood as referring particularly to the titled aristocracy of this country. It refers rather to the Mammon aristocracy. But these remarks chiefly allude to the spirit of aristocracy in its widest sense, whether found among Peers, or Millowners, or Shopkeepers.

and in flagrant opposition to the whole tenor of Christianity; whose teaching is, that all men are alike before God—that the humblest and least arrogant is the truest and the best; that piety and worth are alone nobility; that no man, though his ancestors harried half Europe, and strung up serfs like acorns, or scraped together thousands of pounds, has the right to be proud and despotic with his kindred men; and that men in general have no right to admire or respect anything but that which is of itself intrinsically elevated, spiritual, and enduring; but are devil worshippers and idolaters when they are obsequious and reverential to pride, wealth, grandeur, emptiness, and falsehood. Progress, thence, in this matter, is simply the constantly-increasing attack of human haughtiness and inflated callousness, in whatsoever shape, and by whatever name, it becomes banded into a class.

If we keep this truth before our minds, it will not require much penetration to perceive how shallow and how premature are all such gratulatory articles as the one alluded to. For the whole sum and substance of the matter is this,—that we have ceased to confine our aristocracy to one dress; that we have almost completely destroyed it in one phasis; but only to fall down and worship, more absolutely, more servilely, and more extensively, the same spirit of aristocracy in another phasis, and dressed in even baser habiliments. So far from an advance having been made, there cannot be a doubt but that, were the end of our na-

tion now accomplished, and an absolute sum made of the state of aristocratic domination amongst us, it would be found, that in no time of English history has it been so extendedly, so universally powerful as it is at present. The only ground of consolation we can find is, that we shall soon perceive the right path, and attack and overthrow the new aristocracy more completely than we have done the old.

Let us regard the state of the case more closely: we have set on one side the aristocracy of descent from heroic men; we have denied the principle of the descendant of a brave and great man having any ascendancy over his fellows because of that descent,—denied it in principle, I mean, for its outer manifestations linger perceptibly enough, but sapped and powerless. This aristocracy we have so dealt with, but in its stead, we have set up another—an aristocracy of mammon. We have everywhere admitted, and do tacitly submit to live under the system, that every man, let him be an angel or a demon, who shall by any means, honorable or dishonorable, have amassed riches, is privileged as his just right to bear himself haughtily, and to consider himself superior to all his brethren, whom honour, incapacity, or misfortune have prevented from so amassing.

This may be questioned, but facts are overwhelmingly corroborative of my statements. Let me take Lancashire as a proof, where my local knowledge is more accurate, although that county

can be clearly shown to be in nowise peculiar in this matter. Sixty years ago, how many individuals in Manchester, say, and the neighbourhood, could be called aristocrats? Were there thirty? I am inclined to doubt it. The few old families that resided around it were alone looked up to, and alone looked down. The grandfathers of the present race of monied aristocrats drank beer in bar-parlours, and said "thou" and "thee" to their hand-loom weavers; richer than their hand-loom weavers, but not prouder, not considering themselves as a grade of humanity distinctly higher than those poor weavers\*. How is it now? Can we number our aristocrats? Can we tell how many houses, and villas, and halls, and lodges, and other residences of dignity and wealth have arisen for miles around our swelling Babylon, on every side? Can we estimate the number of mill-owners, warehousemen, and merchants who now, like shell-fish, encase themselves from the unmonied many in the hard husk of unbending pride? We should find it difficult to do so. The number of the taskmasters has increased. Increased, and not by any worth or valour on their part of necessity. Worth and valour many of them have,

\* In support of this view I would refer the reader to "Early Days," by Samuel Bamford, a delightful idyllic representation of Lancashire life at the close of last and the beginning of this century. He will there find how the employer and the employed stood related to each other in those days. He cannot fail to know how they stand in these.

but they are not so made aristocrats *because* of those qualities, for men better and worthier than the best of them are not aristocrats at all. The sole recommendation they have to any respect, the sole pretext by which they treat one cavalierly, *is their cash!*

A battle is said to have been fought, a victory accomplished; let us survey the battle-field, let us estimate the victory. Instead of being a great protest of humanity against inhumanity, we find it to have been simply a conflict between clique and clique. The monied men of the nation have succeeded in getting their right to be proud, their right to a higher position in man's respect than the unmonied, acknowledged by the people. That is all. Some hundred thousand are added to the number of those who insult, by their whole life and demeanour, the finest feelings, the most delicate sentiments of humanity; and, I ask, what kind of a victory is that? Is it not rather a discomfiture of the great by the little, a victory of the false over the true, an increase to the great tide of wrong, which has flowed from the unknown pre-historic sources, and which, by all such victories as this, is widening to an ocean?

But here may arise another objection or two, which it may be as well to anticipate and to answer.

In the first place, it may be urged, that it is the fault of the people themselves, insomuch as they submit to be lorded over by an aristocracy such as this. I reply, that it is the firm conviction:



that cowards make tyrants ; slaves, despots ; and mean souls, mammon-peerages, that has alone impelled me to this attempt. I am not writing, in any case, to the few in whom these evils find their impersonation, but to the many who, if they do not cause the evils, at any rate perpetuate them by their tacit submission or active adulation. And it is not by any appeal to the monied aristocrats to stoop their pride, to ascend from the trumpery pagoda of their present elevation to the great Himalaya mountain of manhood, that I look for an improvement, for a reformation in this mammon-worship, but only by repeated appeals to the unmonied worshippers, in order that they may perceive how vain, how despicable is the thing they worship ; and, perceiving that, learn to pass by all claims for respect that ground themselves on anything but worth and nobility, with the non-compliance and contempt they merit.

Secondly. It will be said that the evil is not peculiar to this day, and that poets and moralists from time immemorial have denounced money as the root of all evil ; consequently, that to lay such stress upon it now is not doing justice to the present generation, and is indeed preaching Utopianism, since whatever the good may wish, mankind will honour and flatter the man who can command luxuries, and who can benefit, relieve, and employ his fellow-creatures. In reply to this I would say, that what poets and moralists have denounced has been the undue amount of energy and care that

has been devoted to money-getting ; but that there is no data for supposing that the monied man was ever honoured for the mere fact of his riches, except in the declining periods of national greatness. Men usually acquired their riches, in the healthy times of antiquity, by a life of heroic patriotism and high-souled endeavour ; then, no doubt, the riches so won helped to preserve the influence and the reverence accorded to the other qualities ; but now let us remember, that it matters not by what base and unworthy means the money is amassed, but that the simple fact of the man having wealth places him in the aristocratic ranks of society, and that he rises in proportion to his wealth. In ancient times, the great and honoured were frequently poor, comparatively speaking, and when the contrary, their wealth was generally amassed after their valour or virtue had obtained for them their power. Moreover, we must bear in mind that circumstances may make an evil, which, in the generality of cases, is but a harmless one, unbearable and deadly. Such is the state of England with regard to money-worship. We are a more commercial people than has ever before found a habitation on the earth. Our genius is essentially commercial, and it is generally regarded as a settled fact among thinkers, that if we are to progress and not retrograde, it must be by a judicious and untiring cultivation of our commerce. Now the end of all commerce, as far as the individual is concerned, is the creation of

wealth ; monied men will multiply in an incalculably greater ratio in a commercial than in a pastoral or warlike people. Hence the worship of money is a myriad-fold more dangerous in England at present, than it ever has been in the history of the world at any preceding time, or in any other nation. If every good and true man does not set himself to oppose this new aristocracy, wherever he may meet it, and wherever opportunity occurs to promulgate what alone is genuine aristocracy, with our increasing commerce, our incessant money-getting, we shall stand as a notable warning to all other nations, how a people may be theoretically Christian and practically heathen ; how what it professes and says may be orthodox in doctrine and religious in tenor, while what it practises and does is heterodox and impious ; how, in a word, while with its voice it is singing the anthems of the Most High, its knee may be bent to the golden calf of Bethel, and its hands be heaping up the burnt-offerings of Belial.

The true-souled spiritual reader feels a shudder creep over him as he imagines to himself such a consummation of his country's history. But let not the sound of the future tense in which that consummation was worded, blind him to the fact that it is already far advanced ; that we are at this moment in a state of which the above description is hardly an exaggeration.

All good men, all great thinkers, are now becoming resolved that it is our enormous, all-

embracing system of money-worship that lies at the root, in one place or another, of the majority of our social and political evils. Looking upon the nature, piercing into the vital principles of things, they can discover no branch of her economy into which this monomania-idolatry has not entered, like a dry rot or a canker. They find it rampant and increasing everywhere ; in her politics, her religious machinery, and her moral state.

In her politics they find it most glaringly, inso-much as this is essentially a political era. The first indications of a system of cash legislation is to be discovered in the Reform Bill ; the grand fundamental whereof appears to be the theory of property qualification. Its fundamental principle, if it have any in particular, is that the possession of money is the guarantee of intelligence and of worth ; or rather, that intelligence and worth have nothing to do with legislation and with politics, but that money is the sole necessary in those matters. Let me have the genius of all the law-givers of the universe, the uprightness of a saint, it does not avail ; I cannot take any share in the making of the laws without I can prove the possession of a certain income. Nay, let me have every mental and moral qualification imaginable, and let me live in a house below a certain rent, or in lodgings, and I can have no share in the election of the national representatives ; while my drunken, dissolute, and ignorant neighbour, pay-

ing the necessary rent, does take his share, and thereby virtually assists in governing me. I am not going into the intricacies of a question so open as this is; I am not advocating Chartist principles; I am not a Chartist; I do but hold up the abstract truth to the unbiassed and the true, and ask them, whether it is the sign of a great and spiritual generation, or of a base and gold-adoring one, that it can find no higher qualification for the exercise of political rights than the possession of cash.

I am aware that it may be said, that such cash qualifications existed before the Reform Bill, and that, therefore, these being retained is not a fair symptom of our tendencies at present. This might, perchance, hold good if the system had been repressed by that bill; but when we find that instead of being lessened it was augmented to a very considerable extent; augmented and reduced to the completeness of an established organized system, we must regard it as affording a just index of the spirit of the times. The objection might hold good also, if the tendency of reform since that period had been in the opposite direction. But such is very far from having been the case. The number of acts of parliament that have had their basis on any other principle than financial economy, and the increase of individual and national wealth,—that have been brought into being, agitated and carried by other appeals than to selfishness, self-interest, and cupidity, it is difficult to discover. Nor are they multi-

plying. High-sounding Christian schemes of no war and universal peace are afloat, but how, for the most part, advocated? By pointing to the expenses of the last war, as they stand in the grand mammoth of the National Debt. An attempt to govern a nation by laws believed to be from God, has never been made, except by the Puritans; the idea of such a thing has been ridiculed and scoffed at, until at length the genius of the Economists has discovered that to carry out certain of Christ's precepts would benefit trade and preserve and increase capital. No sooner is that demonstrated than peace principles, *et cetera*, progress; and the idea of legislating on Christian principles is not ridiculed as Utopian any more, now that to do so can be shown to have a tendency to reduce taxes and foster commerce: were the carrying out of these things proved to be expensive and injurious to commercial money-amassing, how paralyzed would the anti-war agitation speedily become! And yet they are generally believed to be the positive commandments of God himself. It therefore appears that modern middle-class politics, as regards this subject, go upon the principle that it is advisable to carry out in our home and foreign polity what are received by most as the teachings of the God of the universe, whenever so doing is in conformity with the more congenial edicts of the great God-Mammon\*. Of

\* I must not be supposed to be shutting my eyes to the chosen few who start from higher data than these. They belong, however,

course these opinions are by no means universal here. They are in a minority perhaps at present ; but their opponents do not take the high ground of objection I have indicated, but are merely of the negative school of politics, satisfied with the present, and fearful of all change, except such as is sufficiently moderate to be unfelt. All politics are either negative or positive ; and it is by the complexion and tenour of its positive politics that an age is to be estimated. Negative politics are always base. They can be no other. The principle that prompts a class of well-to-do individuals to say, " The existing system is far from perfect, even for us ; for thousands of our fellow-men it is much worse ; but we can eat, drink, be merry, and wax rich, as things are ; therefore, to be on the safe side, we will resist all efforts to bring about a nobler future." The principle that prompts such a resolution can have no other origin than meanness.

And such has ever been, and ever must be, the characteristic and nature of negative or conservative politics. Positive politics, on the other hand, have generally been noble, catholic, high-soaring, and generous. They have been the vehement desire after vague idealic perfection, incorporated into some tangible measures of broad principles. To examine, therefore, the peculiar

to the visionary class, as they are termed, and would in any age have preached the same. The notable symptom is the practical men taking up the matter—the men of business ; and the grounds they go upon in so doing I have not in any way exaggerated.

form into which our positive politics are being thrown at present, is the true way to arrive at a correct conclusion about the tendency of the age, as far as relates to such matters.

What that peculiar form is may be gathered from the preceding remarks. Positive principles have degenerated into parsimony in many cases, into undue valuation and estimation of money in all. It is well known to all who are connected with great movements, that the only means which can be successfully employed with the middle class as a motive power are appeals to the pocket—money to be saved or gained will alone secure the effective co-operation of the middle class\*. This is best seen, however, in the new movement in the economics of the Manchester school. The free-trade agitation was the last great positive political movement we have had ; and during that agitation, and by it, the Manchester school of politics first arose. Free trade was a noble cause, and elicited at once some of the noblest and sublimest arguments, and some of the most sordid and earth-bound. How far the latter predominated in the pamphlets and speeches of the Anti-Corn Law ad-

\* A case in point here suggests itself. In the noble struggle for National Education now being made at Manchester, under the auspices of the Lancashire Public School Association, the paper which has gained it more attention, and silenced more opponents, than any other, and which, indeed, is invincible when directed to the middle classes, is an essay by Dr. John Watts, wherein he proves that to educate the people of Manchester would save the borough some £400,000 per annum.



vocates, we will not stay to examine, but proceed to glance at another fact, pregnant with information as to the mammon worship of the day.

Since the repeal of the corn laws, the reforming portion of the middle class have had no definite rallying point. The leaders of the Manchester school have employed the interval between their repeal and the present time well-nigh, in selecting a new question to agitate and to carry. One has been selected, is to be agitated until carried, and will no doubt be *the* question for some years to come. The question so selected is that of *financial* reform, which means a diminution of the taxes, an annual saving of some few pounds per annum to the individual taxpayer in that direction. This is worth noticing. Out of all the various questions which stare them in the face, and cry out for instantaneous consideration and solution, and which threaten to *make* themselves considered ere long—out of the great Labour question, the Education question, the question of Pauperism, and others, the reforming portion of the middle classes have, after three years' reflection and calculation, preferred Financial Reform for the national rallying standard.

I do not extenuate our present expenditure in any way; I do not seek to depreciate financial reform; I recognise its importance, but not its all importance; and I do say, that there never was a period in English history when men would form Leagues, attend meetings, and coalesce, and band

themselves together to carry a measure, that had not some higher object in it than the mere saving of cash. Hampden and the ship-money will here no doubt be cited; but we must remember that the stand made by Hampden against the ship-money was not on the ground of economy at all, but on that of the highest constitutional principle. It was because Charles levied the tax on his own authority, in defiance of the established law of the country, that Hampden and his party rebelled. Had the tax been imposed in the usual manner, to five times the amount it actually was, by the House of Commons, that Hampden would have paid it at once, there can be no doubt. It was against absolute monarchy he protested, and not against excessive taxation. Had there been no other ground of quarrel than the expenditure, and that expenditure been quadrupled, Cromwell would never have left his prayer meetings and his plough to do battle with despotism and anarchy, and Charles would have worn his crown until he had died in peace. It has been reserved for our own age to show to the world how much energy, enthusiasm, care, embarrassment, and labour men will expend for a barely pecuniary motive!

Were all great questions of principle exhausted, then one might appreciate this one of economy being made the one national middle-class question; not else. But such is far from being the case; and it seems almost unintelligible that, while the aspect in the direction of Pauperism is so gloomy,

so fearfully increasing in its aspect of omen and of threatening, a comparatively insignificant subject should be selected for agitation. Surely it is a sign of somewhat, a convincing proof, were any more wanted, of the mammon worship of our times. While we have this dreary fact of Pauperism\* glaring spectre-like upon us, and ever more spectre like; while we have the Labour question unsettled by the wise, not attempted to be settled by them, and the ignorant left uninstructed, amid poverty and blind exasperation, to settle it after their fashion by themselves; while we have these two questions before us, not to speak of others, financial reform, cash parsimony, might well be left to occupy the back situation it has hitherto done, subject to constant prudence, steady and ever watchful, which is at all times better than spasmodic retrenchment. With these two fearful Gordian knots lying within us to unravel, to see them passed by unheeded, and a purely cash matter elevated into the temporary Oriflamme, is not a healthy symptom; not healthy under any consideration, but less so a hundred fold when that Oriflamme is unfurled in Lancashire, where these hydras stand out most prominently, at the door of every man.

But, setting on one side this view of the case, retrenchment and financial reform do not appear

\* Has it ever suggested itself to the Financial Reformers, that our pauper system is not unattended with expence; that on the ground of expense alone it well merits to be *the* National Question?

to be demanded, on the highest grounds they admit of; or, I may say, the only truly tenable grounds. I can imagine an agitation for economy basing itself upon a really noble and elevated position. To admit this fundamental law of the universe,—That whoso receives, under any pretext, that for which he does not return a due and fair equivalent of labour is a dishonest man, and that the system that fosters such men is a dishonest, plundering, and indefensible system—to admit this one mighty law, true from the beginning of time to this present moment, and to go through our expenditure acting rigidly up to its spirit, would be to reform our finances in a way which all good men would approve, would reform precisely where, and to what extent, they admit of retrenchment and economy. This is the high argument for economical reforms; and this the middle classes do not appear to take up. Corruption is truly exposed a little, but only sufficiently to excite an indignant feeling, and thereby gain warmer supporters; for if any of the plans for reduction are consulted, if any of the speeches of the leading apostles of *£ s. d.* be consulted, it will be found that they have no idea, no hope, of effecting a reduction by the abolition or mitigation of misapplied monies, of corrupt expenditure; have no intention of seeking for it on that ground. The fact of a reduction is what is sought after, a reduction effected in any manner men in office deem good, so that it be effected: if taxation be reduced, it

appears indubitable that the middle classes do not care one iota whether the corruption be lessened, or whether that reduction be obtained by the discharge of useful honourable men, who justly return an equivalent for all they receive\*.

But I wander, and must return from this long digression. Political topics do not come within the design of this work, and the foregoing remarks should not have found place herein, had they not appeared too apposite to be omitted—too clear a case in point to be lost sight of. It is to the social manifestations of the autocracy of mammon, the extent and increase of that autocracy, and the consequences attendant thereupon, that I would direct the earnest thought of the true-hearted reader; and to those subjects therefore, ere bidding farewell to this part of our adventure, I would, at

\* One of the greatest proofs of the principle that guides the advocates of saving in Expenditure, is that no mention is made of an attempt to pay off any portion of the National Debt. A people religiously anxious for cash reform would make world-famous sacrifices to clear off incurred responsibilities which cause its excessive expenditure, and which, transmitted to their posterity, must have a very great share in effecting their ruin. Again, in the meetings in favour of the Hungarians and Romans, except among the working classes, war on their behalf was not advocated, and generally expressly reprobated; although the consistent argument compelled the use of the most direct, the most efficacious method for ending that brutally indefensible war. *It was chiefly so reprobated from fear of the necessary expenses*, as I know for a positive fact, having had a considerable share in carrying out one of the largest of these meetings. To do justice on God's earth, except when it touches the purse, is essentially the political principle now regnant among Reformers.

the risk of reproducing some of the observations made at the commencement of this chapter, once more return.

In all such questions, the readiest and the highest method is to brush away all palliations and excuses, all speciosities and sophistry, and plunge at once to the abstract truth; in this case, to the first principles of mammon aristocracy and worship. None will deny that the true state of society, the ideal of excellence for it to attain, is where worth in every case is discovered and honoured, where worth is indispensable to honour, and where no man by any other attributes or possessions can obtain station and receive respect and honour if he be not eminently a man of worth. Neither will any, however in practice they may shirk it, have a doubt as to what constitutes true worth. Admitting this, they must also admit the converse; that the lowest opposite of bathos and degradation is where a man can have a high station in society, occupy posts of honour and dignity, be *selected* to occupy such posts, and command the general respect and servile honours of the world at large, and all for something in itself of no merit, and granted to that something even when it is united with the utmost baseness, with the want of morality and of principle. These two antipodes granted, we must bear in mind the ebb or flow of the great ocean of events, how man, in the individual and the nation, is either progressing to an abstract good, as I have said, or to an abstract

evil; and inquire accordingly to which of these moral antipodes are we progressing, as regards the element of aristocracy?

To answer "to the latter one" would imply a scarcity of our faith in our English energy and strength; to answer "to the former" would be wilfully to blind ourselves to things as they have been, and as they are. The only reply that safely can be given is, that, whether we are plunging into deeper darkness merely to come out into the clearer day-light ere long, or whether we are not, the fact is indubitable that, as things stand at present, we have made a giant stride to the latter and the baser end.

The real state of our condition is this, the result of our fighting this; and it should be preached again and again, in every high spiritual place, with power, and in sublime tautology, that men may see it and rise against it, and rebel, and scorn this new God-Mammon as more of a wretched Idol-Deity than the old. The progress we have made is this.—A class of men possessing the land, and being mostly representatives of ancient houses, the founders and members whereof in the olden time had proved themselves in very many cases heroic men, partly on account of their landed possessions, but chiefly on account of their descent from those heroic men, and the generation of worth being believed in by them, claimed for themselves a select position in the nation, monopolized to themselves its posts of gain and of

honour, and received an obsequious respect from all other classes of society. *Into this old aristocracy of long descent, and presumed generated worth, no amount of cash would buy a man, as a rule.* Consider that. Something like principle in this old aristocracy. Well, as time flew by, men began to discover that the generation of worth was a presumption solely, and no fact; that the representatives of illustrious houses, of long-departed heroes, were not unfrequently imbecile and unprincipled; and they began to blush at rendering honour to what was so plainly not honourable, men of personal worth refusing to do homage to men whose worth had appeared in past centuries, concentrated in some centuries-removed progenitor. What should have been the national course, had we been progressing to the higher abstract? That the people should have fought on these grounds, saying, "If we are to bow down and do honour to anything on earth, it shall be to personal valour and worth, and to that alone; the possession of a million of acres, the descent from a hundred kings, shall not make us honour you unless you be yourself a *nobleman*." Then, conquered on this principle, what a grand triumph for humanity would the wane of the ancient aristocracy have been! Instead of that, let us view the way we have taken. At the waving of the wondrous magician's wand of Richard Arkwright, the Cotton manufactures, with all their correlative tributary money mints, arose: fortunes were heaped



up in a few years, and there arose a new class in England, a class, numerous, energetic, and powerful, of moneyed men. These, when they beheld the large dwellings and the glittering haunts and society of the aristocracy, purchased similar habitations, and would have mingled in the ranks of the landed, but were waved away imperiously. Then the course of social advancement became diverted; instead of a warfare of worth against land, of present valour against remote heroism, it sunk into a fierce conflict between kind and kind, cash against land; thrift, parsimony, or knavery, against presumed generated worth; Satan against Satan. The moneyed tradesmen battled it with the aristocrat; his banker's balances were as noble as his acres, they were as good as he; and now if the victory be not complete, it is no longer doubtful; and though politically the old aristocracy have mighty strongholds still in the minds of the people, the aristocracy of mammon has mingled with it, if not displaced it.

Now, I must ask, again and again, whether this is not a fearfully retrograde movement: must ask how by this the high feeling, the sensitive honour, of God-descended humanity is benefited and vindicated? Is it a gain, that my next door neighbour, after half a century's strugglings, has got his title to snub me acknowledged or borne with by those who, erewhile, snubbed us both? Is it a gain, that a large number of those who, a

little agone, toiled and fought manfully with us in the wide waters of labour and of toil, have now obtained the privilege, so soon as they be laden with the diamonds and gems those waters oftentimes produce, of leaping from our shoulders to the shore, and mingling with the formerly small cohorts of those who regard our battlings with apathy, contempt, derision, or scorn?

No, in whatever light we may regard it, this new aristocracy is more degrading, more insupportable than the old. It is more ubiquitous, in the first place. The aristocracy of descent and land were not everywhere, were not numerous; large districts were without a single member of the class, and a man might have lived a long life and never encountered the spirit of that aristocracy in an unpleasant manner. With the aristocracy of mammon it is not so. Every town has its regiment of banded *millionaires*, who trample under foot the finer feelings of their former equals in cash, and present superiors in soul, and who usurp the honourable functions of the community. One cannot walk the streets without seeing men and women, who should have greeted us with the frankest courtesy, roll by, unheeding, in their carriages, inflated with their ingots, exalted high upon the pillars of their accumulated gold.

Again, the pride of the landed aristocrat was of a purely negative character; it was based upon antiquity and transmitted worth, was held as an

unquestionable matter-of-course right, and therefore was placid, temperate, and, as far as pride of any kind can be human, was so. But the pride and self-exaltation of the moneyed aristocrat being a new thing, based upon nothing but the corruption and venality of society, is feverishly positive; not by any means self-evident, and so perpetually to be asserted. On the former his pomp of pride sate easily; you could bear with it, for he had never been, within human memory, in anything like your own sphere. But the aristocracy of the latter sits upon him unbecomingly. If you have one spark of high feeling in your composition, it is not bearable to you, for you know that, neither in himself nor reflected from his progenitors, has he any claim or title to the lordship he usurps. If I am compelled to have the sensitiveness of my nature outraged, if I must bear the cold hauteur of any of my fellows on this earth, I had greatly rather it should come from the remotest descendant of a real heroic man, however distant, than from the vast tribe of wealthy Day-Plants, whom qualities not necessarily good, and frequently necessarily sordid and contemptible, have raised from their yesterday's station below me or on my level. The pride of the nobleman is brotherhood to the fine-spirited, compared with the rude contempt, the vulgar assumption of a nobler clay, the ever-present feeling of superiority, wherewith a London merchant or Lancashire millionaire regards

his poorer, but equally true and honourable, brethren.

But I would not for one moment be supposed to be simply advocating hereditary aristocracy in preference to that of mammon; I regard both with aversion as drags upon the mighty chariot of man's development. All that I have in view, in bringing them into juxtaposition here is, to demonstrate that aristocracy is not necessarily a titled one, a peerage; to show that the progress claimed by and for this age has not yet been attained; that it has only, so far, effected a transition from bad to worse. Had there never been any aristocracy in England previous to this one of mammon, the evil would remain undiminished; taken apart from all considerations, the bare fact that, in an age when riches can be amassed more swiftly and more universally (among the middle classes, at any rate) than in any other, the possession of riches has become the unquestionable passport to dignity, to worship, and to honour, should create apprehension to the calculating and the cautious should awaken indignant protests, effective opposition, among the religious-hearted and the lofty-spirited of our nation. Casting on one side all the common-place palliations, as,—such a state of things being human nature, the conventional justification that it always must be so, and numerous other plausibilities that are intertwined around this and every other

confused social question, and considering it abstractly,—does it not appear a terrible, a tremendous anomaly, pregnant with corruption and with danger, that any race of men, more especially when believing the Evangel of Christ, should consent for a moment to live under such a system of wholesale gold idolatry? That the possession of great, good, and noble qualities is never required in any notable portion of our national economy, political, religious, or social, while the possession of cash, or cash connections, in every case *is*, and that we submit tacitly to this, perceive and feel it, without starting up to draw the sword against it, as it were, determined to die rather than to live under a revolting Paganism, testifies against us to all who have formed their beings in the depths of spiritual truth, and marks well the *progress* of our species since the days of Cromwell, Milton, and the Puritans.

While such a mammoth sin remains unchallenged, unassaulted among us, in vain are all preaching machineries, all religious appliances; here, in this one fact, we have national practice confronting national faith, and telling the young and easily-moulded that, however higher things may be set forth in words and in theory, in action and in reality this is the national creed and profession. Here have we a Stentor preacher, striking with sledge-hammer emphasis at all morality and religion; telling forth in unmistakeable language the new gospel, that to amass riches is the supreme end of human effort; that the richest man

is the noblest; that merit without cash is inconsiderable, unvaluable; that with cash merit is superfluous.

That such is the sermon of the age, may be doubted by some; but I cannot imagine any candid truth-seeker, following abstract truth whithersoever she may lead him, so doubting; basing himself upon man's descent from God, drawing his belief and ethics from the *great Bible of Nature and of Christianity*, and so learning the everlasting axiom, "that the appendages, the possessions of a man are of no import, but only the purity, the nobility, the manliness of a man;" and testing our social state by that axiom, I cannot see how a truth-seeker can doubt that the sermon of society, in this matter of mammon, is as I have indicated.

Does he turn to our religious machinery? Surely he would say, here, where the poor carpenter's Son is worshipped, is the nobility of worth recognised, the brotherhood of rich and poor asserted, the service of mammon denounced and repudiated. And yet what does he discover? Fresh from a perusal of Bede and the early chroniclers, writing of times when Christianity was a vital principle, and no time-serving, convenient, semi-political hack, he discovers how it was bishops were then selected, how bishops were then influential and adored. He finds that for long years before the mitre crowned the piety of the apostle, he had laboriously, by the aid of incessant, zealous, Christian endeavour, worked himself into Abbacies and other places of pious eminence; that long before the

mitre came, the worship and the love of the nation or the district had been given to the poor, landless, moneyless priest, because his worth, his zealous efforts, his radiant piety, had shone forth luminous to the people. He was selected then for his piety alone, and from his piety alone was his power and respect derived. When he turns from thence to our modern prelates, what of resemblance can he find? He finds their influence derived not from piety and personal worth, but from the cash and its adjuncts which their ecclesiastical dignity bestows. Take away from a bishop his income, his princely habitation, and his seat in the assembly of Peers, and the respect, reverence, and adulation he receives goes also with him. Let him be as pious as Paulinus, but rob him of these, and he sinks into quiet obscurity upon the instant. I do not seek to join in the wide-mouthed, vulgar cry against bishops, but surely to the sincere churchman this matter is worthy to be studied.

If he go deeper into it, he will not find ministers struggling after the forlorn hopes of the Christian crusade, to obtain the darkest districts in order to carry God and God's religion to the ignorant, the savage, and the depraved; he will find the scramble to be, for the most part, after the easy remunerative living; and in the congregations also the same spirit will be discovered; he will not perceive that ministers have influence, and are respected in proportion as they seek out those forlorn hopes and valiantly do battle therein, but

as they are successful in their oratorical opera music, and summerset-throwing, successful in their scramble for a fashionable preaching-place or a wealthy cure.

If he turn to the law, where abstract right and wrong should alone be considered, he will see that there is one legislation for the wealthy and another for the poor; that the question, in many grave matters, is not right or wrong, guilty or innocent, but rich or poor alone.

He will see the cloth-clad, purse-bearing scoundrel paying his fine, bowing to the magistrate, and leaving the dock unpunished, in laughter, and at the same time the fustian-clad, moneyless one sent away abruptly, to walk the treadmill in heart-ache and vindictive tears. The spirit of the law never goes beyond cash. The seducer robs me of the honour and the comfort the wife of my bosom shed around my dwelling and into my heart, injures me, and outrages the just feelings and morality of the nation—and what does the law to vindicate me and that morality? If I have no cash, it does simply nothing; if I have, it gives me such a sum of money as it sees good, in compensation for my lost life-companion. In immoral France they imprison the guilty parties, and so avenge the insulted decency of the people, but with us, it would appear, gold is the one super-eminent panacea—is God.

If from this he turn to our purely social state, our domestic relations, he will find the same ser-



mon preached. He will discover that every man of money can command, if he wish it, an *entrée* into the most select circles, while a poorer superior is debarred; that our women are educated to regard marriage as a cash speculation, taught to sacrifice the man to the money-bag, to select the debauched millionaire in preference to the purer, nobler, and poorer man; so that any idiot or bear, be he even bodily or mentally deformed, can, if he have cash, issue out upon the world, and, with very few exceptions, buy any maiden he may choose to select. And, if he will come up to the North here (and I doubt not others could perform a like office elsewhere), I could point out men, and they not rarities, whose lives have been one huge beastliness, too gross and too revolting to stain the page of any book whatever, and so gross as scarcely to be believed if told; having no redeeming qualities of education, genius, personal beauty, or refined manners, but in word and in deed the same disgusting blots on humanity; and yet whose names are on the roll of magistrates, some of whom have been and are members of parliament, have been admitted into the society of the landed aristocracy, and fêted in all the coteries of the middle classes—and all because their depravity is only exceeded by their wealth. I could point out, in the mean time, men in humbler circumstances, of pure life and upright spirit, who are groaned down by society for entertaining extreme opinions in politics or peculiar doctrinal views in religion.

When he has seen all these things, and they but broad, salient instances in a labyrinth of the like, what conclusion can he draw but that a new gospel has been received by us in the matter of mammon, and the old placed on one side: he must conclude that a balance at the banker's, a landed estate, or a thousand-windowed mill, are the qualifications for elevation and honour, are superior to virtue and to worth; that the Bible is not true, and that Christ is insignificant when compared to Cræsus!

## CHAPTER VI.

### ASSOCIATION AND MORAL MECHANISM.

“ — Self-drawn out, as man  
From amalgamate false natures.”—E. B. BROWNING.

THE most notable, the most characteristic feature of the age, and one altogether peculiar to itself, is its universal application of the principle of association; its comprehensive and omnipresent division of labour and action by Delegation. In every branch of our national economy it is paramount. Wherever we turn we find all things transacted on a large scale, by societies and associations, rather than by the individual man. If one has a house to erect, a club is employed to aid us; a book to read, a club is set on foot to provide it for us; charity to dispense, delegated officers will superintend its due dispensation; until, at length, life has grown like a large cotton-blowing machine\*,

\* For the information of those unacquainted with cotton manufactures, it may be as well to state, that the blowing machine performs the first process of the manufacture. One great mouth is supplied with the raw material unpurified; the machine digests the imperfections, beats them out, and discharges it clean.

you have only to put yourself in the one end as rough cotton-wool, with all your appendages and intrinsic qualities, good or bad, with all your wants and capabilities, and you will arrive in due course, without exertion on your part, at the other end, pure cleaned material, with all your wants and badnesses extracted, by the aid of this cunningly-devised intricate mechanism.

Now, of all the evils peculiar to our time, of all the tendencies of the age, this one of excessive Association and Delegation is the most natural and therefore not the least dangerous. When we contemplate the imperishable achievements this century and these generations have accomplished by the aid of extensive co-operation, when we set ourselves to imagine the far mightier things that co-operation might still so easily accomplish, and must accomplish here, if we become regenerate—elsewhere, if we do not,—we can easily perceive how naturally the mind of England has fallen into the dangerous error of regarding union and association as the one great panacea for the redemption and glorification of humanity. There is a natural tendency in the human spirit to convert a large good into an infallible and all-adaptable panacea. Brave-hearted men have felt strength infused into their world-oppressed souls by means of unshaking Faith, and the fiat goes forth that none shall be strong but by Faith alone. A nation has grown and flourished under a limited constitutional monarchy, and men thereupon give out that no other form of

government can possibly do well for nations. By a judicious application of the waters of God diseases have been largely banished, and hydro-pathy must henceforth be the sole physical regenerator of mankind. To this error mankind is prone; it is our proneness to such errors that constitutes the imperfection of the human race; and it is the calling of the man of thought to discover and to expose the peculiar phase in which his age has embodied such natural errors, and to remind it, in terms adapted to that phase, that when God created the universe he declared that *all* was good, and that the business of that universe is never for long conducted by single and sectarian means, but by the large employment of a vast intricacy of influences and agencies welded into a catholic whole.

Hence when we discover that our age, having felt and experienced the noble advantages to be acquired by the agency of Association, has got to regard Association as a panacea for all things, a never-failing, ever-applicable nostrum, it becomes our duty to indicate a few instances where that agency is now being injuriously applied: to define as clearly and intelligibly as may be, where it is the province of Association advantageously to work, and where it can only be employed with danger, or with certain evil.

This I must now essay.

Man has, it may be said, two natures, the internal, and the external; the latter consisting of his faculties of intellect and soul in relation to

the universe and God, the former of his faculties in general, in their relation to his fellow-man, and to the workings of the world. The laws of his external nature are the regulations of society, the arrangements of mankind; they are a thing of agreement purely, in which agreement he takes his share, and are merely tracks wherein to pass through life, to be adopted by calculation or by choice, except when in any way they are at variance with the fiats of his internal nature. All the material relations of man with the world and with his fellow-man, viewed as a member of society, belong to this external nature; and being a matter of social compact solely, a plan of action laid out for the crusade of humanity by mutual consent, it may be carried out in whatever manner the consenting parties may consider the most efficacious and the best. Whether it be by Association and Delegation, or by individual effort, cannot be important, so that the effect demanded be produced.

For an instance let us select railways. That it is for the benefit of society that communication should be facilitated to the highest possible point, cannot be doubted; it is therefore the duty of every member of society to assist to the extent of his ability in the establishing of railways. But it is not the duty of any particular man to do so by personal exertion; it is the *duty* of no man to make tunnels, swing tubes across straits, and pile up embankments; nay, in reality, it is his duty not to do so, because it can be shown that to

delegate that office to the few who are conversant with its principles and details will alone ensure a complete achievement, and prevent an universal disorganization of labour. For men to co-operate together to establish railways, and to delegate the actual making of them to a selected few, is therefore seen to be a healthful and legitimate province for the employment of co-operation and delegation. By this example also, we can perceive the philosophy of the entire subject; can perceive what is nearly the complete solution of the problem before us, that the true sphere of association and delegation lies in the secularities of life, in the outer workings of the social and political economy of the nation.

Wherever, within this sphere, those principles have been employed, without infringement upon any other province, it has been with the most signal success. The agreement of the laws of nature to their employment in such matters has been demonstrated by the undeniable evidence of accomplished facts. This nineteenth century has performed the most astonishing feats the world has yet seen, in commercial, mechanical, and political enterprise, chiefly by a spirited application of these great auxiliaries; and wherever non-success has attended their application in such matters, it has never been because of their application, but because the thing to which they were applied was in itself unworthy and unprofitable. In all the works of the political economists, the dry barren-

ness that renders those productions the literary Saharas of the day, breaks into something like geniality and symmetrical beauty, when the subject of division of labour is being treated of. It there shines forth that the key-stone of commerce lies in that division of labour; that by it alone we have this gigantic catholic church of commerce stretching forth in infinite ramifications, in all lands and among all peoples. It is by associated co-operation, and action by delegation, that a company of banded merchants win for us British India, carry European civilization and enterprising strength into the strongholds of Hindoo thriftlessness and superstition; by them that steam vessels conquer the mighty ocean itself, and unite the remotest countries in a general intercourse; by them that time and space are annihilated upon the land, and the fabled days of magical transporting caps brought home to every man by the nobler wizardry of skill and labour; by them that political reforms are achieved; that a newly-arisen mercantile class can grapple with an immense aristocracy bulwarked around by centuries of descended influence, by deep-rooted prestige and limitless possessions; and that a people, without the aid of force or loss of peace and life, win for themselves unimagined privileges, and change an adamant constitution under the shelter of its iron citadels, and under the influence of its own standard.

In short, as I said, the proof of accomplished facts is with us, when we fix the outer material



arrangements of life as the true and proper province for the exercise of the principles under consideration.

But we have not confined them within this province. We have never dreamed of there being any barrier to their universal use, and therefore, with the blind zeal of believers in infallible nostrums, have carried them headlong into matters of the inner man, into his intellectual and spiritual nature, where their employment can never be of any very excessive advantage, where it must always be hazardous, and in many cases positively deadly.

Their application in intellectual matters is dangerous, because the natural constitution of the human mind is such that no solid development of the man can take place except by slow, intense, and incessant self-culture. No delegation can be allowed, no associated machinery can aid him materially in his development. By elaborate co-operating societies, a showy surface may be acquired which otherwise might be wanting; but surface and hollowness are not the things we need. A well-based, firm, detailed development, a mind stored with complete information, *knowing* the minute process and facts of that information, can be gained by no other means than by personal study, by individual care and culture. It is a goal to which there are no cheap pleasure-trips, no by-paths and short cuts. Göthe himself, in a land of academies and libraries and clubs, must take

his eighty years to be the lofty, clear-sighted man he died: laboriously acquiring, by hard personal effort, all the vast wastes of inanity he reclaimed and made fruitful for himself and others.

The mind of man being intrinsically the man himself, and the guidance of mankind the sum of the completely-developed idiosyncrasies of the individual students, the individual thinkers, it is a matter of the deepest import to society, a matter of everlasting life and death to the being himself, that that idiosyncrasy should be fearlessly and honestly developed from within, and not from without. Against all external moulding of the intellectual faculties, nature has been protesting since the dawn of recorded thought. The sole secret of great minds, the real meaning of what we call originality, is simply that such minds refused to receive their form from without; freely and conscientiously cultivated their own God-given faculties; receiving what there was from without, not implicitly, but to examine, assimilate, and digest, by the personal tests and forces within them. The insignificant many, the men whose blundering has retarded progression, and sent humanity upon its forty centuries of desert wandering, have been those who did precisely the reverse; who accepted other men's intellectual idiosyncrasies for their own; who took the result of another's efforts for their own, being too dastardly, too sordid, too false, to battle for like results themselves.

Socrates and Plato cultivate themselves from within; think, and give out their thoughts in form, and the many put on that form as swaddling bands, and humanity swears by the Platonic formula, until the Stagyrte thinks for himself again and changes the direction by a portion of the body, adopting his new style of mental raiment. And so on till this day. The Schoolmen, Descartes, Bacon, Liebnitz, Spinoza, Locke, Priestley, Hartley, Reid, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, think in like manner, and in like manner the unthinking receive their conclusions until the next real thinker steals them away to accept his. Thus, by the means of her darling sons, her great original men, has nature been for centuries protesting against this system of the generalization of the human intellect.

This is the highest phase of the question. To descend into its more practical points of view: the great reason why association is healthful and legitimate in outer secular affairs, and in inner intellectual matters hazardous or hurtful, is that there is this diametric difference between the two: in the former, if the attention and effort be unremittingly and duly given to the machinery, the result must come as intended. In Banks, Assurance Companies, Building Societies, Anti-corn-law Leagues, if all the workings of the machinery be rigidly superintended, if all the energy be concentrated thereon, the end for which they were established must be accomplished. In intellec-

tual things, the converse is precisely the case. We may safely assert, that the more attention and energy there are bestowed upon the mere machinery, the more insignificant the results will be. The most perfect associated assistance given to intellectual culture, must be the simplest, the least perceptible.

Moreover there is a constant tendency in man to mistake the means for the end; to lose sight of the ultimatum aimed at in our admiration of the machinery adopted for obtaining it. We see this in every branch of life, in the universal history of man. This tendency would be dangerous in employing extensive association-mechanism to material objects, were it not that, as I said, the result is certain if the machinery be attended to; when, therefore, we remember that that result is not certain in the other object, it is apparent how much the application of cunning, comprehensive means in mental development is a thing to be at all times zealously guarded, to be applied with care and cautious watchfulness as a hazardous adventure.

Let us see how the truth of this is demonstrated by the actual working of the intellectual appliances we have established and incessantly belaud.

Ours is an age of Athenæums, Lyceums, Mechanics' Institutes; all established for the one end of scattering knowledge, and assisting in the cultivation of the minds of the rising people; all achieving little or nothing in proportion to the importance they arrogate to themselves, to the pon-

derosity and multiplicity of their ramifications and machinery, none of them having a strong healthy vitality; but partly growing effete through their excessive oiling of the wheels and pulleys. Nay, it is not going too far to assert that they have now grown (as far as relates to the institutions for middle-class young men) to be the most notable quackeries of the day, the aggregate charlatans of life. They are so, simply because of their obtrusive noisiness. In every town of note is one of these institutions raising itself up with the proudest pretensions, gathering within itself a certain number of young men, calling them "the rising intellect of the place," and it their Alma Mater. And yet when you come with sober thought to look into it, to examine, test, and gauge these "rising intellects," you will find them to be, as I have said, mere quackeries. Wherever I have met with studious men,—men who really do study,—not make a blatant profession of it merely, but who endeavour sincerely to build up within themselves a solidly-erected intellect; these men always, as far as I have seen and heard, study, in that sanctuary of thought and culture, the secluded privacy of home, only employing these Athenæums in their legitimate capacity of suppliers of mental food, in the shape of books. While on the other hand the energetic member of such establishments, wherever I have met him, has been characterized by superficiality, arrogance, and the cant of an outside literary knowledge which has no foundation,

save indubitable sand. For, indeed, a very insignificant portion of the machinery is set apart to the actual bestowing of any kind of knowledge; and of that insignificant portion a still more insignificant one is made use of. The library is the real heart of such things. It is from that that the whole establishment originally arose. Because a young man, with a guinea a year to spare, could only procure four or five books with that guinea, individually expended, while by joining a thousand others he could have four or five thousand volumes at his command, Athenæums were originally commenced: that is the theory of them—the principle upon which they took their rise. A glance at any catalogue of such places will show how far learning, true and abiding, is sought for by the members in proportion to time-killing and amusement; while a personal inspection will manifest that while the empty novel, comic sketch-book, and light magazine are so dog-eared and bedirtied as to be unreadable by one undeprived of his olfactory powers, the solid books, the books with thought and life within them, after many years standing upon the shelves, are clean, and frequently uncut.

The next in possible advantage to the library department, are the classes, where, by the co-operation of a number, the acquiring of foreign languages, and various branches of science and art, is brought within reach of many who otherwise would be altogether unable to acquire them. But

the insincerity of these knowledge-seekers is here seen in the attendance; the number of members attending any of these being ridiculous when compared with the gross number, and few classes having a remunerative existence.

After these comes the lecture department, which, under proper control (under the control a company of earnest students would have directly), might be made such a powerful engine for spreading information, extending the faculties, and elevating and enlarging the tone of thought of a town or district. To effect this, they should be regular in delivery and subject, and not, as now; eccentric in both. Were they to be conducted on the principle of the college courses,—if various subjects had their regular professors, and were annually completely treated by them, from fundamental germ to the last consummation,—then would Athenæums begin indeed to be healthy institutes, keeping their true end in view, and not, as now, forgetting it. But, from the present irregular system, when a “Nicht wi’ Burns” is followed by a lecture on astronomy, to which succeeds a comic entertainment, followed in its turn by a philosophic course, and that again by an exhibition of a dwarf, or a dramatic reading, what good can possibly accrue, especially when twenty of the “young intellect” attend the philosophic course, from which something might be gleaned, and the room will not contain the numbers of those who crowd to see a man balance himself

upon bottles, or grimace a comic song? Is it not a mockery to designate such mere mental taverns Literary Institutions?

The inquiry here naturally arises, since all these are such failures, and since, however, these institutions increase and multiply, what part of them is actually well supported, and how do their members employ them? Perhaps the only generally successful portion of the actual machinery of these places are the Debating Clubs; the few advantages of which are overwhelmed in their disadvantages. They are the natural result of the employment of association for the intellect, encouraging, as that must, a showy outside of knowledge with no inner root, rather than well-smelted well-assimilated information. Beginning at a late hour in the evening, a young man is drawn away from home to admire his own glib utterance, and astonish a few of his fellows by an exhibition of a miracle peculiar to our century—the manufacture of glittering texture from perfect vacuity and emptiness. Were he to choose from the library any book, at random well-nigh, and to retire home and read it, it cannot be but he would retire to rest a wiser man than after a month's attendance on a debating club. It would be difficult to tell what result springs from such societies, except the augmenting of unlimited babble, and the increase of vain sciolism. Nothing can be more intensely comical than the diletante depth and metaphysics of these debates;



the pen of Cervantes is wanting to describe the Quixotic scene of a meeting of men arguing with fiercest gesticulations, with inflated oratoric pomp and self-importance, as though pleading for the rights of man, before the universe, upon some such topics as these—"Have the crusades really benefited humanity?" "Does Andrew Marvel deserve the thanks of posterity?" "Whether is Kirke White or the prophet Isaiah the truest poet?"—while you hear, as I have heard, in the most florid harangues the most childlike ignorance displayed. Burns designated as one of our finest nineteenth-century poets; Mahomet spoken of as the predecessor of the Saviour! The resolute, independent knowledge-seeker does not herd with such as these; knowing the falsity of the gregarious system, he is perfecting himself slowly, but truly and surely, in his quiet home—not there.

The general purpose to which such institutions are applied is as a kind of lounge, where there are companions to be met, benches to loll upon, romances to read; where cane-heads can be sucked and time killed until an amusement is decided upon, the casino opens, or the opera begins.

The only excuse or palliation the warmest supporters of these institutions as they are bring forward, is, that they keep young men from the tavern and elsewhere. But I believe that the good of such a change is much exaggerated. What can you call these places but intellectual

taverns? this debating, concert-attending, lounging existence, but mental dissipation? You only change the form of the evil; the evil is there unmitigated, under a new phase: and if you simply compare the bodily dissipation of the tavern or brothel with the mental dissoluteness of these places, I am by no means convinced that there is any gain in the metamorphose. To society it is a gain, certainly, to change the form of profligacy from the tavern to the Athenæum; but to the individual himself there is little or no gain. We always lose sight of the fact that it is the soul, and not the body, that it is of importance to keep active and alive; that the body is alone of importance because of its influence upon the soul. In the actual fact of my pouring down my throat certain potations, or giving myself over to certain bodily intemperances, is no evil, no crime; but it is so because the body has an indissoluble union with the soul, and all bodily pollution reacts upon the soul. X It is physiologically and religiously true, that were it possible for a man to commit bodily misdeeds of the grossest kind and at the same time maintain his soul untainted by those misdeeds, he would be a true and blameless man. The character of King David has ever been a stumbling-block to men; they have not been able to understand how he could be an adulterer, a murderer, a debauchee, and yet the man after God's own heart. The solution of the question lies in the fact just cited. David had one of the

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*5-27-28 The writer*  
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strongest and most vigorous souls ever sent upon the earth. The consequence was, that when the scum and residue of his fleshly excesses fastened upon his soul it had strength to rise against them, enter into conflict with them, and cast them away. The bodily sin had not its corresponding influence upon his powerful soul, and therefore to the God of souls was no sin; and thus the high active-souled adulterer could be the man after God's own heart! It matters, therefore, little to the individual (though greatly to society) whether the soul be sullied or diluted through the medium of the body, or directly through the mind. It is no great achievement to rescue a soul from being soiled and dissipated in taverns by beer and wine, to soil and dissipate it by empty quackeries in a literary institution. Nay, the latter is even a retrogression, insomuch as the tavern-haunter knew his dissipation to be base, and blushed while he went astray; while the other prides himself upon his conduct, and looks down alike upon his grosser and his wiser brethren.

Are, then, these literary associations entirely useless, entirely noxious? And would it be advisable, if possible, that they should be discontinued? By no means; with all their evils they do really accomplish somewhat; and their evils are only so strongly animadverted upon here, because I do not consider that the question resolves itself to the narrow point of "to remain as they are, or to cease to be." I believe it within the

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compass of human intellect to see the causes of this lamentable vindication of an otherwise mighty and beneficent agency, and seeing to reform. The cause is merely the calling in the principle of association, in matters where their application is hazardous, without perceiving that, and without bestowing the corresponding care and attention. The evils arise from having fallen into ecstasies at the machinery, forgetting what it was erected to perform ; in concentrating thought and energy upon the means and losing sight of the end. Athenæums have grown to be things *per se* ; people have a vague idea that they are of themselves good and great things, though why they never attempt to consider. People do not see that in all these plans and machines, and club within club, and society within society, is no beauty, no benefit, except in proportion as they spread enduring knowledge among the members of the same. They should be regarded as necessary evils, not as a positive good. For every man to have all the books he needs, all the instructors he requires, so that the use of institutions would be superseded by individual possession, that would be the highest state to be attained. For those who feel they want their assistance they are a good ; but he is the strongest man who requires them not. They are a benefit when they serve to aid a man in his pursuit after learning, and to teach him how supereminently great is that, rather than not to have which he calls in such intricate

auxiliaries; but they are an inexpressible harm where they lead any one to consider them as good of themselves, and so to mechanize their minds by mingling among objectless mechanism; when they cause any one to conceive he can win, even by the most elaborate cramming, the most subtle patent-medicine system, that which can alone be bought by patient investigation and examination, by long nights of laborious study. But this is by far the least noxious of the trespasses of association upon forbidden ground. It is where it casts into the shade the moral and religious duties of individuals, and steps in with its oiled mechanism where angels dare not, that it reaches its deadliest point of evil. If active, personal attention and exertion is the ineradicable nature of man's intellect, a thousand-fold more so is it the nature of his soul. The life of the soul, which is religion, is altogether a matter of the strictest individuality between man and God, and not in any case between man and man. An active religion will, we know, have certain results towards man; which results, as they benefit man in general, are also social duties; but those duties may be discharged faithfully, may be exceeded even, and yet remain pure outward secularities, and the performer himself be destitute of all religious life. And it is not the doing of these things that constitutes religion,—it is only when they are the effects of a strong-pulsing religious being, that they have connection with religion at all; only when

they gush from a living well-spring of active inner piety, that they have any spiritual worth. This has grown to be altogether lost sight of. If a man perform the common social obligations of his station, he is considered a religious man; for the world only looks to the outward development of the inward life, and at first sight it seems proper that it should do so, seeing that actions are all men have to deal with practically,—that motives are beyond them. But it is found afterward, that the truth and healthfulness of the religious feeling from which they spring, is of the nearest importance to us. There is such a constancy to truth in nature, that she will not permit anything, however actually good, that has its rise in expediency and falsity, to remain long in successful existence. Hence the religious duties of man to man, discharged from no impulsive warmth within him, but from mere acquiescence with national regulations and social convenience, soon sink into an empty and unproductive falsity. The duties of the citizen must never be confounded with the duties of the son of God. It is the duty of society to provide for the sick, the hungry, the abandoned: it can do this best by infirmaries, workhouses, and visiting-charities; and therefore when a man has contributed his due share to the support of these, he may say with perfect truth that he has discharged the charitable duties of a citizen. But the evil I complain of is, that it has become recognised that the

employment of association and delegation is admissible in religion, and that when he discharges those citizen's duties, he performs as well his religious responsibilities. This is a fatal error ; for a religious duty cannot be delegated at all, but must be performed personally. "Work out *your own* salvation," are the words of one who understood what true religion was, and they contain the whole substance of religion. Not Cræsus himself can escape from the inexorable law, and though he subscribe millions to procure a delegated working, it avails nothing, as the man himself actually works is he true or false.

"Let him take up his cross, and deny himself," said Christ ; and would it have satisfied him, had they answered, "Oh, we subscribe certain guineas per annum to a society which takes up the cross for us, and employs numerous agents to deny themselves!"—would he have been satisfied? Satisfied!—and yet that is a just and fair illustration of what our practical religion has degenerated to. It has become a pure matter of cash, to be discharged by delegation ; and a man is pious as his purse is light or heavy. He rides to town daintily ; he returns daintily home to his costly, luxurious home ; and once a year collectors call for his annual subscriptions, which his cashier pays, and a debit in his ledger ends it all. In this is no active principle ; no self-denial is employed ; it has no effect on his comforts and superfluities,

never breaks the sleek ripple that plays over the surface of his sluggish life, but is altogether a matter of figures. But alas! in sad truth, so spiritually dead are we, that such a cold formality of charity passes current for genuine religion among us: until to speak of a good, charitable, religious man, means merely that out of his abundance he gives a little; that he pays deputies to perform all his duties, forgetting that God never enjoined those duties for the abstract good resulting from their discharge, but only in order that by their personal performance his soul might be purified and strengthened.

Thus have we carried our mechanical nostrum into religious morals, until we are completely bound up and entangled in a web of elaborate moral mechanism; active, achieving something in social matters, but inanimate and unspiritual as mechanism ever is. We are Christians now by machinery; we have a clock of dexterous workmanship, which, if only regularly wound up with its golden key, will chime for us all our Christian duties regularly enough, alarming no man with too earnest striking. Let a man pay pew-rents and a few annual benevolent subscriptions, and he may fold his hands comfortably without a distracting care, in sure knowledge that there is something to pray for him, and to do good for him. Money having been seen to be God now, as is natural, money wins heaven; and he who has only cash sufficient to



pay the tolls will find the straight, narrow, upward road (macadamised since the time of Christ by modern progress), as easy travelling as the broad, open, downward one !

But, thank Heaven, nature is sternly faithful to what is true ; sternly at war with what is false ! From things based on false principles she will never produce lasting results ; and the hand of the Nemesis is now seen, revenging herself for this extensive mechanism, by the deadness of the middle classes. It is a fact, painfully forced upon the notice of all who are in any wise connected with active enterprises, that, except in money-getting, the middle classes are utterly dead ; that such a thing as personal exertion cannot to any large extent be found among them. Cash they will give you ; cold sympathy they will give, but action, even of the least onerous kind, self-denial the most meagre, cannot be extorted from them. They have folded themselves in their mantles, and with their eyes within have no care for anything abroad ; they wish to run smoothly on in the sleek routine of a voluptuous, *laissez-faire* existence, and, rather than be dragged into a rougher, manlier life, will consent—to contribute cash.

The result perchance will be, that spirit will gradually recede before mechanism, until it becomes the national faith that man himself is a kind of spinning-jenny, valuable in proportion to the quantity of dances and charities he produces.

In the mean time, to some this aphorism may not form an unsuitable conclusion: that exactly in proportion as a man concentrates his attention on the various moral machinery around him,—as he merges the individual in the society,—precisely in such a degree is he less a man.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LITERATURE.

“Excellent times these for the no-thinker to get a fugitive reputation ; excellent times for books that must die in a year to live for a day.”—NOTABILITIES OF WAKEFIELD, BY JOHN CAMERON.

“If a man is inflamed and carried away by his thought, to that degree that he forgets the authors and the public, and heeds only this one dream, which holds him like an insanity, let me read his paper, and you may have all the arguments, and histories, and criticism.”

R. W. EMERSON.

WE now turn to that branch of our national manifestations which will afford us an accurate daguerreotype of the real state and tendencies of the people—to the literature of our times. For, if the outer tastes and desires, the satisfaction of the senses and the gratification of the animal portion of man, be all significant items in a comprehensive whole, how much more significant, how much more important must be the desires, aspirations, and gratifications of the mind and intellect! To discover accurately how the gifted men of an age give forth their utterance; to discover the motive power and final cause of those utterances; to discover the intellectual thirst of the ungifted, and the supply they covet and obtain, is to discover the vital sap and marrow of the state of that age.

Literature has ever been the surest reflex of a people ; in all history, as we have found the current literature, so have we found the people. In Greece the light of earnest, lofty literature waned just in advance of the physical power. And in Rome the wild-souled ballad and chaunts that had urged on the resistless nation to conquest after conquest, were well-nigh forgotten as the national rule became in jeopardy ; forgotten for the weak Homeric re-echo of Virgil, or the objective sentimentality of Seneca. In modern countries also, the fluctuations of the reading tastes and supplies have usually borne a marked resemblance to the practical workings of the era. In the Elizabethan age the subjective forces of Shakspeare and Spenser and Bacon find their objective correspondence in Raleighs and Drakes and Sidneyes. In the days of Cromwell and heroic action, we have Milton, and a large tribe of writers, all characterized by the same Hebrew intensity of thought and sombre religious earnestness, though not all by great ability ; and when a dissolute king returns, by the "Grace of God," to be "Defender of the Faith," the reflex of a reign of harlots is found in Dryden's poems and Aphara Behn's romances. Later on, when the genius of the time turned to sophistry and fox-like diplomacy, when life and men were regarded as mere agents and tools of rat-like cunning and corruption, Pope and his satellites were there, with their boudoir elegancies

and drawing-room verses, indicating faithfully the feelings and tastes of the period.

France, however, presents the most striking instance of this fact. Previous to the great revolution, its literature was of a character sufficient to cause the prophetic forebodings of the acute men who scented it from afar. Broad religious earnestness it had none; thought it had, but it was the thought of empiricism, and not thought intensely gushing from the inner well-springs of reflection: light wit, general levity, and absence of all deep feeling were its peculiar characteristics. No matter what work literature had to do; a bitter mocking jest, a well-turned sarcasm, were the sole weapons employed, totally indifferent as to whether it was a courtesan to be annoyed, or a religion sapped. Such commodity the reading public energetically devoured; it was not healthful food, and no God-made man could largely eat of it and live, and so a huge national cholera came on, and everything was speedily in collapse!

To examine, therefore, what the speaking men of our day have to say to us; how they say it; what manner of men are the speakers; to examine what pabulum the nation demands and devours, is no work of supererogation, but one intrinsically connected with the design of this adventure.

The first great fact that forces itself upon us is, the magnitude of our modern literature. The activity of the press is past all description. Day after day fresh supplies of books are drafted forth

upon the world, perplexing men's minds with their endless multiplicity, deepening the already deep confusion, until there is scarcely time or opportunity for a literary man to hold any communion with his own self, to follow out his own intentions, and to have intercourse with his own individual soul ; so all-absorbing is the great tide of published speakings. The mighty Indian river pouring with its thousand mouths into the sea, divided and subdivided into deltas and sonderbunds ; American primæval forests, with their tangled grasses and brushwoods ; the countless flights of Arabian locusts, pouring interminably over the desert cities ; all these are as nothing to the ceaseless flux of printed matter that floods upon us from this British press. The increased amount of literary wares is out of all proportion to any other contemporary increase. Next to the excessive development of the mechanical principle, the excessive development of the moveable types is the most astounding phenomena of our times. The next fact that must also force itself upon any man who comes to survey this literature from the older ones, or from the oldest of all, God's living literature of nature, and not from the conventional estimates of its dignity and worth, will unquestionably be the extreme scarcity of *thought* ; a scarcity almost amounting to a total absence. That a book is, or should be, simply recorded thought, does not appear to be accepted in these days. We can find traces of a certain

plausible argumentativeness; of considerable reflection in the practical branches of literature; and even of empirical thought, forced upon the utterer by the progress of this subject; but can rarely or never find any trace of a fierce ebullience of reflection that arose within the deeps of the soul, fermented therein until it gained its points of overboiling, and then only issued forth into public view when it had burnt its way out, so to speak, and could not any longer be contained.

Glancing broadly upon it, our literature appears to me to divide itself into three classes;—comic literature, novel literature, and the literature of style.

Every one, who observes and reflects at all, must have remarked the vast increase of comic writings in periodical, magazine, and book. In all preceding eras facetious and comic compositions constituted a small proportion of the publications of the day. They were a wholesome spice among other graver labours; an amusement to be taken, as a man harassed by business seeks relief in an occasional ball or opera. And this was, and must ever be, their healthy proportion; but now such is not the case: comicalities of all kinds are regarded as a staple commodity of popular book-publishers, and take their place, equal in numbers and quadruple in circulation, with all other departments of literature.

The “Pickwick Papers” have had an enormous and a pernicious influence on the reading com-

munity. I do not speak it in any disparagement of that most masterly book, or of its brilliant and generous author. The fault was in the age, and the predisposition of the people. There are times when food, highly nutritious in itself, through hidden unsoundness in the eater, awakens grievous maladies. So with *Pickwick*. It came forth as a true spring from the hidden waters of humour, which underlie all things, animate or inanimate; and as men cannot but be captivated with whatever is genuine, they went wild in their admiration of it, and its author deservedly took his place with Cervantes, Rabelais, and Richter, as one of the master humorists of the world. Unfortunately, however, it aroused a latent thirst for frivolity and light-mindedness such as none could have imagined would ever find even a passing lurking-place in the sturdy Saxon character; and since then we have had little else than one immense demand for books professing to be of the humorous vein, and a corresponding deluge of the most multifarious assortment of comic inanities ever produced since the invention of moveable types.

If the demand and supply had been formed of the same sterling quality as constituted the characteristic of the originator of this taste, the prospect might have been brighter; though, even then, for unsober writing of any kind, however masterly, to have a large territory in national literature, augurs little soberness in the people.



But, unfortunately, that has not been the case. Between the genius of Dickens and the shallow, grinning flippancies of his thousand and one imitators, there is as glaring a difference as between Richter and a circus clown. Dashing off-handness, rattling effrontery, forced comicality, and an unvarying groundwork of levity, are the chief ingredients in these shoals of popular bagatelles. Life is regarded as a mere mountebank feast, to provoke nothing higher or deeper than a pun or a paradox. Good and evil are alike made laughable; clothed, at least, in a garment of the ludicrous. The haughty peer, the man-atheist—the grubbing miser—the drunken rake—the light girl of the ballet—all are spoken of with the same complacent flippancy; postured and distorted till a remunerative number are led to smile.

This element is by no means confined to its most natural province of tales and sketches. Perhaps in its more undisguised phases it is beginning to pall, and, consequently, to wane. It has impregnated works not professedly comic, and rules over provinces one would have imagined to be safe from such pollution. It has entered into the highest walks of literature, into the region of present human history, which is travel, and into past records, which is history proper. Herodotus travelled into Egypt, impressed with the dignity of his errand and the sacredness of his self-appointed mission. Our decade furnishes us with numerous instances of the precise converse to Herodotus.

We have innumerable instances of men of intellect setting forth to explore foreign countries with the predetermination to write a facetious record of their experiences. One of the chief minds of the time has even so fallen; a mind which, in other provinces, has won for itself, it would appear, a lasting standing in the classics of our land. We find him setting forth upon a voyage to Egypt, Greece, and Palestine, with the preconcerted design of a comic recital of his impressions and adventures. Let them be what they might, a comic volume is definitely understood to be the certain result. One would have imagined that a frame of mind more of the Herodotus vein was alone adapted to such a tour. True, that the forced sentimentality of affected tourists demanded castigation; true, that they were sickly and absurd; but it is infinitely better that a man, before visiting such places, should force himself into an atmosphere of unnatural romantic seriousness, than force himself into an also equally unnatural spirit of universal levity. The strain of mind which could lead a man, when standing in Athens, amid its venerable relics, to have no thought more in unison with the associations it should enkindle than a little badinage about fleas abounding, and Turkish Zuliekas taking Morrison's pills, and when upon the great Pyramid to entertain equally-elevated thoughts,—is a strain of mind to be viewed with sorrowful regret; the more so, as it existed not in any mere facetious

hack, but in a high-hearted, brave, and generous man.

Nor is this the worst; we have another literator actually selecting, as *his* share in the mighty achievements to be accomplished by the press, the compilation of a *Comic History of England*, in two considerable volumes. Not a humorous, *bonâ fide* performance, as such an attempt might so well and so usefully have been, but a mere series of plays upon words, modern slang, and general buffoonery\*. Comic grammars, sketch-books, tales, travels, and essays,—these were bearable, if not enjoyable; but a *Comic History of England*! What a satire upon the literary aspects of the age that one book, issuing from the most popular literary clique, furnishes us with! A friend of ours, a stern old Covenanter, who regards this day of infidelity, as he justly calls it, with a grim contempt, on stumbling upon that work in a publisher's shop, not long ago, turned to the shopman with the question, "And when, sir, will ye bring out the *Comic Bible*?" The reproof was daring, but not by any means too

\* Since writing the text, the following passage in *Blackwood's Magazine* has been pointed out to me:—"A *Comic History of England* would be an exceedingly curious and even a valuable work. We do not mean a caricatured history, with great men turned into ridicule, and important events burlesqued; such absurdities may provoke pity, but they will hardly extort a smile from any whose suffrage is worth counting."—Vol. lxiv. p. 543. And yet they gain circulation among many whose money is worth counting!

severe; and the speech lies here recorded as a suggestion.

But the most dangerous feature in which this literary frivolity of the age exposes itself is, in its extended application to controversial purposes, in the gravest disputations of religion and politics. There are some topics upon which serious argument is thrown away, and which can best be exploded by ridicule. Cervantes laughed knight-errantry away. But there are also evils, venerable from their age, and dear, even in their rottenness and uselessness, for what they once were, for the ideas they once embodied; and which, therefore, should only be attacked from the deepest, the most reverent sense of duty, and attacked, *par conséquence*, in soberness and sedate courage: not by banter, however effectual; not by jokes, however witty. Whence comes it, that with all their wonderful natural talent and comprehensive learning, such men as Voltaire and Diderot do not succeed in gaining the hearty admiration and love of any of their fellow-creatures; awake no enthusiasm in sympathizing hearts? It is not that the work they accomplished was unlawful and unnecessary; it is not because they rejected Christianity; that, if they were honest, no Catholic man dare presume to condemn; but it is because they did their work in an unworthy manner, in guerilla onslaughts and insidious bravo-thrusts, instead of open manly blows; it is because they spoke of the religion of their ancestors,

and fellow-creatures on every side, with mockery and indecent levity of thought and word. And yet exactly the same style of argument has become the staple of our controversial crusades. In religion and politics, the weapon of ridicule is too extensively employed; but, as the ridicule is at present on the side of the *pars maxima*, we have, as yet, no outcry. A religious enthusiast preaching to the money-deadened evils of a grubbing generation his high ideal of spiritual excellence, is laughed down as a dreamer and foolish visionary. A man clinging fervently to the spiritual formula of his forefathers is also laughed down as an absurd resurrectionist. The state of mind which verges on sheer inanity, alone meets with respect. And in politics, the carefully-elaborated plans of earnest thinkers are ruthlessly dismissed by a few dashing witticisms in leading journals and political brochures\*; and a petition, to the

\* The Bishop of Exeter, intolerant, bigoted, and superstitious it may be, having still got a something which he believes to be *his* truth, fights for it to the teeth, and when, defeated by the wretched latitudinarianism of secular power, he writes the boldest and manliest protest conceivable, he receives from a British press, almost universally, only quizzings, revilings, and paltry ridicule. No broad man can have sympathy with his narrow shred of a belief; but every broad, true man should have sympathy with his courage and his sincerity. Again, the master-spirit of his age, conceiving it to be his God-appointed mission to speak from his deep religious soul huge warnings to a generation straying from the safe and proper fold, because, simply, his revelations do not square with the dominant cant of the day, literature and literary men, abetted by mean, sub-editing hacks, disgrace themselves by back-kicks and sneers at their unquestioned king.

finger ends of whose subscribers the hot blood of deep feeling rushed when signing, is received by a reformed House of Commons with laughter, and by a British influential public with complacent scorn. The man who has the firmest convictions, the highest sense of right, will always wage war against the convictions of another with becoming earnestness and sobriety; he alone ridicules in such matters who is imbued with a spirit of the lowest negativeness, which merges usually into the basest form of man-and-God-infidelity.

But the evil is not merely direct and external. The effect of such a demand for frivolous literature, and such a continuous, super-abundant supply, must be enormous upon the character and constitution of the people. They can no more consume all that without being proportionately affected by it, than a man can drink incessantly and copiously without becoming light-headed. Effect it must have, and that effect can scarcely be good. No man would select a wife from a company of tittering school-girls; he would know that *their* qualifications would not be sense but silliness; and we may also know that where flippancy and comicality have obtained a large place in a national literature, weakness and not strength is the result. The man to whom humour even (much more comicality only) is not a passing relief from graver studies merely, but the preponderating pabulum, is, almost of necessity, incapable of energetic, manly worth. For, as the regard-

ing of life as a mighty fact, and duty as a grand and imperative reality, and all that environs us as facts and realities also, is the surest source of active virtue and religion; so the exact converse must necessarily proceed from the wholesale diffusion of works, whose only possible tendency must be to undermine solidity, to make life a volatile vaudeville, mankind so many amusing eccentricities, and the world itself a farce.

Were we, in these remarks on literature, arbitrarily confined to one class, to one element thereof, I should adduce the great comic family just spoken of as the truest indication of its tendencies; because, not only is it the most widely diffused, but it is also the most peculiar to this time of all the products of the press, and therefore the most significant of all those products. But there is no such arbitrary boundary placed upon our survey, and I proceed accordingly to examine the second class, which I called novel literature; but which might more appropriately have been designated the literature of inanition.

With unvarying regularity, as the voluminous Mississippi of English publications rolls its tide along, does it receive its multitudinous Missouri tribute of novels, travels, dilletanti histories, biographies, recollections, correspondence, and such like. Month after month, the circulating libraries absorb all these, which are much demanded by eager hundreds, and then, with ma-

chine-like regularity, are supplanted on an understood arrangement by the next batch, and sunk for ever. All is pleasant, regular, fluent, and mechanical. The veteran three-volumist sits down comfortably to his work, as a weaver at his loom, and turns you out his annual six or nine volumes with the utmost ease. He possesses also an advantage over your weaver of calicoes, who, at times, is inconvenienced by scarcity of material to weave; the novelist never is,—when one is ended he begins another. This week he writes finis to volume three, next week chapter one of volume one follows as a matter of course. To suspend an interest over nine hundred pages is not a Gordian knot to an ingenious man, especially when it is never required that any great moral truths should be inculcated, any definite and peculiar idiosyncrasies developed. To satiate a morbid, ravenous demand for interest of any kind, satisfying the curiosity without calling into play any high power of heart or intellect, is not difficult. Not difficult, and yet remunerative; and so we have a constant succession of candidates for favour holding up their various book tubes, and crying tumultuously to all passers-by—“Walk up, gentlemen, and see how extraordinary life appears through *my* kaleidoscope!”

A misanthropic man, to whom the inanities of mankind are food for no sorrow, but rather mirth, might draw an infinite amount of saturnine merriment from the distorted posturings, the spasmodic



efforts of the three-volumist to catch the public eye. A game at foot-ball in the meadow beneath me furnishes an excellent illustration. Now the ball is in this corner of the field, and there is a crowd of legs, struggling and kicking in intricate confusion; now, a master-stroke sends it flying through the air to another quarter altogether, and thither the confusion of legs betakes itself, with clamour enough; and so the game runs on. Thus also, in the novel-writing world, a work of genius leads the way to feudal times for subject, and forthwith mediæval history is hunted down, and every incident and character therein melodramatized in the pages of the eager imitators. Then another like pre-eminent production appears, to illustrate low life, and the tide of novels leaves feudalism, and takes to the slums and alleys and workshops for material. Then a master's hand captivates the world with a romance of exaggeration, and low life is thenceforth discarded, and we have a series of strange, phantasmagorial pictures of murder, elopements, adulteries, and wholesale poisonings; a fiction of extravagance. Lastly, sickened with such unnatural incubi-dreams, a beautiful domestic idyl is created, and in a few months the most domesticated man is almost induced to abhor his home, from the maudlin cant about hearths, clocks, family bibles, ingle nooks, and superannuated chairs, which flood upon him from every side, as though the whole novel press had been placed under the temporary censorship of a

school boy on his return to school, suffering from over-feeding and home-sickness.

Thus does the motley procession skip along, in the foreground varying, but with the background ever of sameness and vapidty. For the most part all characters are the same in one and in any other novel: the name is merely changed and the casualties diversified; while the things said and described are so uniform, as to render the compilation of a little work of common-place reflections and replies in certain crises through which the hero must be dragged, the only thing requisite for bringing the power of novel-manufacture accessible to the meanest capacity.

Fictions, within their due limits, are undoubtedly one of the healthiest branches of literature; and viewed comparatively, as novels merely, without reference to anything higher, the shoals now deluging us are generally degenerate and unnatural. But the evil is in the proportion they bear to sounder writings. With humorous productions, they should be the small fund of reading recreation, and not the all-important business of reading itself; and were the novels of the day a thousand-fold better than I am disposed to consider them, we should still have little occasion to congratulate ourselves on the aspects of our literature.

But this class is by no means confined to novels. There is a species of travels that comes under this category. Travels, reminiscences, *et cetera*, not evil *per se*, but only numerically, pro-

portionately. These are not comic, but inane. A flimsy sketch of the lions of the chief city, the height of its monster steeple, the style of architecture of its town-hall, the beauty of its women, and the scandal of its high life; these form the burden of a host of works, to the utter ignoring of the deep life of the people, the manifestations of humanity in the countries travelled over. In this class also must be included a genus of book peculiar to this age: a genus that has its origin in the British Museum, where, without a spark of genius on the compiler's part, without an atom of insuppressible warmth of conviction, a few dry, unknown, and unimportant facts are simply disembowelled from unread tomes, to attract attention for their appointed honeymoon of perusal, and then to disappear, in order that another resurrectionist in a quarter of a century may disembowel once again, and live.

Such, without exaggeration, is the second class of our literature at present. And surely, when we perceive such to be the case, we may cease to boast about our national stolidity and granite firmness, or to decide that such characteristics of us are confined to material things; since it cannot but be admitted that the great substratum of our intellectual supplies is a comic and frivolous literature, and the next stratum in bulk and popularity, a literature of inanition.

But there is yet another class remaining, which,

for lack of a more expressive term, I have called the literature of style. It might also be called the literature of the external. This class claims for itself a station distinctly apart from those already touched upon, and will certainly claim a much more respectful, more careful consideration from thinking men. It consists of those numerous histories, dissertations, criticisms, and miscellaneous efforts, avoided by the votaries of the lighter branches with awe, as too learned and too deep; but which appear anything but *deep* to him who has fed among the true deeps of human utterances. In this department we have such a galaxy of brilliancy and learning as almost to dazzle us into an admiration, which, after mature reflection, we can only award with much qualification. Vain, glittering criticism, correct philosophical anomalies, laborious historical research, sound prudential reflections, and polished perspicuity of composition,—these abound more in our land at present, perhaps, than in any other era since human thought and action were chronicled in words. And if literature were simply an art, as painting or sculpture, to be refined and elaborated to the utmost smoothness and symmetry, and, in proportion to that elaboration, excellent, nothing would be left but to reproach the age for not sufficiently patronizing this latter class of books, and to say to the writers thereof a hearty well-done. But there are many who regard literature as something incalculably higher in its objects than mere

canonical good taste and scholar-like research; and to such, even this, our most learned and loftiest literature, will not be satisfactory. They will discover one all-pervading evil, viz.: that in almost all cases the stronger and nobler requisites for a true book are sacrificed to a certain equable standard-level of a polished style, both of thought and diction.

The model which elegant historians, *et cetera*, appear to take before them, is a certain sum-total of consummate smoothness. Now, a book containing Titanic heroes, terrific villains, and medium common-place characters, wide and jarring extremes, as all true recorded history must be, is incompatible with such results; and when that result is obtained we may rest assured that the true soul of the history has been falsified to attain it. Facts may not be altered, nor suppressed; but it is perfectly easy, with all the facts correctly told, with no unwarrantable arguments and deductions, to produce a history altogether false in spirit to the times it portrays. To fuse the man of to-day into the customs and spirit of yesterday; to enter into the separate idiosyncrasies of the men who enacted a part therein, so as to furnish a vivid and life-like representation of by-gone men and eras—this is the duty of the historian, without this is there not history properly speaking; and have we any history now with it?—any work wherein there is internal evidence that the writer wrestled

in the depths of his spirit with this subject, and so produced?

I will not answer "no" absolutely, though I almost ought, correctly, to do so. But we shall certainly find everything sacrificed to the style of thought I mentioned, that the literature of this last high-class is wholly an article of *virtù*, as it were, proceeding from the brain outward, and never from the uncontrollable motions of the entire man.

But it is in style of Diction that the characteristics of this class of publications chiefly exist. A wholesale system of compositional foppishness is established and conformed to; classical terms, fine artistic touches, beautiful melted-butter sentences,—to these must the author who would be read devote that attention which should alone be bestowed upon his subject matter. The literator must emulate the beau who stands before his mirror adjusting and retouching, and trimming himself into a model of tasteful adornment. Truth must not walk the world in dishabille, but must go forth with her true figure half-hidden in harmonious cadences and graceful periods, if she would not be groaned down as an outrage to refined taste. Take up the reviews of the last work of this class, and see for what it is eulogized. It is not because the author speaks evidently what he intensely feels—because he is an energetic, faithful truth-seeker, and as energetic a truth-speaker; but it is because he has an elegant classicality of composi-

tion, a conventional judgment, and an ease and chastity of style. Let a man speak forth heavenly truths in language natural to him, and we find that little attention awaits him either from reader or reviewer; "fustian crabbedness is not to our taste at all," and so the work is dismissed. But let another man string together a collection of respectable extreme-avoiding trueisms in laboriously fluent prose, and the book is largely patronised, and all the world is talking of Mr. So and So's beautiful English and intelligibleness of thought.

Now what is the end and aim of style in composition? It is that words should be selected the most adapted for adequately expressing the conceptions to be uttered. Style therefore is, *per se*, nothing; but only valuable as it is an auxiliary to effective utterance. And yet this learned and intensely clever literature is marred and stunted as Chinese women's feet in their compressing shoes, by the subservience accorded to the ruling autocracy of style of thought, which means conventional moderation, and of style of diction, which means elegant phraseology.

A class of literature we certainly have, loftier, nobler than all this. But it is too numerically insignificant to take its place in an estimation of our literary aspects. It consists of individuals, not hundreds as the others do; and while this volume could hardly contain the number of volumes which

belong to the last and highest category alone, a few lines would embrace all who are worthy to take rank in this grand uncategorized report. Clearly, therefore, my survey must be regarded as complete, now that this last great class has been considered and dismissed.

It will doubtless be said, that in this survey I have been narrow and unfair. And to guard myself against that condemnation, I must, in conclusion, elucidate the principle whereby I have tested our literary tendencies. I have taken the very broadest and most generalizing aspect possible; and have in no wise been content with mere learning, intellectuality, and power of writing. Viewing our literature in the light of a scholar and artist, as a connoisseur, I should arrive at the most favorable conclusions. But in no such light have I viewed it, but only as a man. I have never been content with books upon laying down which one can say, "That has amused, interested, or haply instructed me;" I have everywhere been in search of productions on closing which, one could exclaim broadly and honestly—"That has been as a draught of Heaven's elixir to me; purifying, strengthening, elevating. By what I have therein read, I feel a better, a wiser, and a stronger man. Better, because more determined to struggle after a purer, truer life; wiser, because seeking deeper into the great problem of the universe; stronger, because



more resolute to do battle with the world's monstrosities, more prepared for the mighty conflict of existence."

And it is because I have found but very few to which I could apply such parting thoughts; it is because when I have found them I have discovered them swamped well-nigh in the great literary Mississippi spoken of before, that I am constrained to conclude that our literary aspects are not as they should be, that we have blended in our literature the two excesses of the age; mechanism, materialism, and super-refinement, and therefore produced a literature, as a whole, of the completest objectiveness and empiricism.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DUTIES AND TRUE VOCATION OF THE LITERARY MAN.

“This is the sublimest thought of all ! If I assume this noble task I can never reach its end ; and so surely as it is my vocation to assume it, I can never cease *to act*, and hence can never cease *to be*. That which men call death cannot interrupt any activity ; for my work must go on to its completion, and it cannot be completed in time ; hence my existence is limited by no time, and I am eternal. With the assumption of this great task I have also laid hold of eternity.”—FICHTE.

THE truth is, as the conclusion of my last chapter would show, I have been estimating the literature of our day as it approximates to a certain idea of duty, which it does not even recognise, and, consequently, after which it does not strive. And, therefore, this supplementary chapter has been rendered necessary, in order to introduce two questions ; when we have answered which, we can bid farewell to this matter.

Our questions are : 1st, Alone, of all labourers upon earth, has the literary man, man of talent, man of genius, or by whatever other name he may designate himself, no duties to perform ? 2ndly, If he have duties, what are they ?

These are inquiries we now hear little of, because the great public does not see their neces-

sity ; and for the literary man who does to give forth such interrogations, would be like writing upon the wall a *Mene, mene* of condemnation of his craft. We hear much of the "claims" of men of genius ; but unless they have duties, I do not see how claims of any kind are to be established. The man of letters who, consulting his own taste and pleasure solely, has selected literature as his walk in life, and written several volumes of popular works, and spent their produce on the spot, considers himself perfectly justified in setting the sympathetic press at work to claim for him some national recompense and recognition ; but the same man of letters would be considerably surprised by a hand being placed upon his shoulder, a stern voice demanding, With all your genialities and chatty reminiscences, what have you actually produced in literature that one can call an accomplished duty ? He would be surprised, I say, because, with hardly an exception, the literary men of our times do not recognise any duties as peculiar to their profession, and devolving upon them by reason of their gifts, of the genius to which they feverishly enough lay claim. And yet, if any class of men under heaven has engrossing, all-important duties to perform, the class of literary men has surely the most engrossing, most important of all secular responsibilities.

They speak in some places yet of the responsibilities which attach themselves to the employment of many servants, as to their moral and

mental improvement; of those, more especially, which the fact of subjection entails upon the inferiors in society, as regards reverence and obedience to the superiors; of those, sometimes, but rarely, which connect themselves with the possession of wealth: but I can conceive of no responsibility so absorbingly urgent and imperative as that which the employment of the press to work upon the minds of thousands, the possession of talents higher than the average of mankind, must of necessity entail.

For it is not as though a book were but an article of *vertù*, to take its place in the history of literature, if worthy, and there to have an end. Good or bad, powerful or weak, positively or negatively, it is a *force*; it has to take its place, therefore, in a far higher history, in the history, namely, of the advancement of the human intellect: which advancement the emptiest accession to our literature in some degree assists or retards. Whatever its pretensions may be, every published work, from the silliest child's book to the metaphysics of Kant, has some influence over the life of its readers; if not by directly urging them to good or bad thought and action, at any rate, by employing a strong negative influence in keeping in the shade the true works of the intellect, and in filling the mind with vapidity when durable substance of some kind is demanded.

This will be readily granted as regards the deeper and more serious works; but it is more in-

tensely true as relates to lighter literature. Consider the wide field it possesses in proportion to the former; consider also that the students of the former, being thinking men, are infinitely less likely to be influenced from without than the latter. The young man who sees the rakish sot rendered amusing as a reckless, captivating hero, cannot rise from the work portraying such, as susceptible of the degradation of the man in that respect,—as little liable to emulate his off-hand prodigality,—as he did on sitting down to peruse it. Between the entertaining book and the entertained reader there exists an affinity which seems constitutional in our nature, and which, unconsciously enough, is ever busily at work. The best, worst, fiercest, mildest, noblest, and silliest novel characters all blend themselves together, assimilating into a whole, and have their effect in every province of decision, and action, and help, silently but surely, in the formation of the completed character, be it what it may. This is a responsibility that cannot be ignored. Whatever branch of literature be taken up, solid or frivolous, serious or comic, the same responsibility clings to it; and, whether the author purposes it or not, his book must be an agency of some kind:—either like the little field-fountain trickling on a pebble, or like the resistless dashings of the overflowed ocean against the yielding coast; or else serving as a decoy to lure away the unwary, by a false-feigned music, from the true melodies that come from the fountains of

the spiritual Deep. When, therefore, we once are led to regard literature as a huge thousand-tongued motive power for evil or for good, it can require no further demonstration to show that the employers of that power have weighty responsibilities, and very momentous duties.

This brings me to the second inquiry, What are those duties? Duty is but another name for the power which should actuate a man in certain efforts; the duty of a literary man is that which should incite him to composition. The world, for the most part, recognises but two such actuating motives—the love of popularity, and the love of fame. For the former, however it may run after the books composed from such motives, it everywhere professes a large contempt; while the latter is regarded as a lofty and honourable motive, for which it has deep admiration. It is considered base to write for present plaudits, but noble and magnanimous to cater for those of the succeeding generations; but, in reality, one is as worthy a motive as the other. Why should it be weak or base to write for the applause of my brothers living with me on this earth now, when their applause will gratify my social heart, and aid my economical development; and true-spirited and strong-minded to write for the applause of my brothers' descendants, when those applauses will be emptiness to me? Surely, surely, the writing from a love of posthumous fame has all the weakness and vanity of writing from a love of present

popularity, without its worldly wisdom. Let us speak of the soul and fame of Shakspeare. Think ye of the great soul of Shakspeare, wheresoever he may be, that it is good for that soul now, because when on earth he won for himself the lasting plaudits of humanity—because, two centuries after his death, flippant chatterers call him “immortal bard,” and deep thinkers “World-Poet?” Or is it not rather well with that soul, in proportion as he spake out the promptings of his own conscience fearlessly,—as his written, spoken words were the faithful utterances of the voice of God within him?

Higher, incalculably higher than any love for fame, present or to come, must be the motive that urges a true literator to his task; higher, nobler, than to kill the time, or cram the cerebral store-houses of the reading public, must his duty be.

There is an opinion abroad that a man should just simply consult his own *taste* in selecting the walk of Literature he intends to follow, and nothing beyond that. The various honourable crafts of cobbler, parson, book-keeper, lawyer, pedlar, opera-dancer, barrister, soldier, tinker, or literary man, *cum multis aliis*, lie there open for the life-neophyte to choose from; he has heard of immortal poets and literary lions, and, having moreover somewhat of a talent for the pen, he selects the trade of literary man. Then, again, he has to make another selection. There are certain demands for certain literary wares of

various descriptions, and he must choose once more which of these demands he will supply. The comic, the satiric, the sentimental, the classical, the learned—all these are open for his choice. But if such be in reality the case—if he has to *select* his sphere at all,—to choose whether his line shall be tragedy or comedy, essay or history, farce or tight-rope dancing,—then I say, with all the bother about state-pensions and poets-laureate, the literator is beneath the cobbler and the tailor, and takes his rank with the ballet-dancer and the mountebank, as a minister to the capricious tastes and cravings of society.

It is never the duty of the literator to *select* his province; where selection is possible, the only duty that remains to him is to hold his tongue, and write not. One great lesson this age has yet to learn is the sanctity of human utterance—the sanctity of the press as the most effective means of utterance. It is not fit that every one who chooses should rush pell-mell into print, as though he had a perfect right to do so; the recording and disseminating of convictions or non-convictions is a mighty secular sacrament, not to be hastily entered or lightly performed. It is only permissible for a man to write when his feelings, his convictions, his intuitions have swollen to an overflowing fulness—have gained that state of white-hot intensity when they burn themselves a pathway forth. The time to write is only when writing is commanded by the internal God-sent



forces of a man's being ; and his duty in so writing is simply to embody in the fittest language and form, the imperial fiats of his soul.

All the reforms, progressions, and high achievements of humanity since Time began, have been, are, and ever will be, the conquest of the physically strong and materially enduring, by the holier and quieter powers of the morally strong and the spiritually true. And it is when a conscientious, sincere thinker *thinks*, that the world and mankind is progressing more than when all the universe is a flame with annexations of territories and Peninsular wars. Had there been no spoken utterance in the days that have been—no means whereby the semi-thinker could receive the full-statured thought of the true-thinker—Europe at this moment had been more barbarian than Cathay. And were the written utterances of the press to be swept away for the future, were there to be no means whereby the thought of one man could be communicated to millions, the course of events would be retarded many decades of centuries. The press, therefore, is the mighty pioneer of the future crusades of this immense Humanity, and the literary man is placed in the position of the Seer or Prophet, whether he will or not ; and his mission is to think truly and fervently, and to see that his unthinking fellow-men have the accurate results of his true and fervent thoughts. And if so be that there be any round about him who are in labour with the great

thoughts they cannot get delivered of, then is it the function of the literary man to stand between such and the world, and to see that the great thought have a legitimate and a living birth. It is his function, after recording his own intense convictions, to become the mouth-piece of the wise dumb-thinkers; to speak for those tongueless ones who cannot themselves find utterance.

Viewing the matter *à priori*, in its cosmic aspects, this appears to be the duty and avocation of the literary man. But when we come to narrow our ground, and to descend to England and to particularities, then the call for literary men being earnest, fervent seers and preachers becomes immeasurably augmented; for a great battle between the pulpit and the press has been silently fighting, and the press has won the victory. For a century now, and with vast accelerated force of late, has the press been confronting the pulpit in every walk of life, both secular and religious, until it has become the stronger of the twain, and the press is now the church of the nineteenth century. All matters of dispute, public or private; all the crotchets and conceits of unsettled stomachs; all the bursting cries and rapt, ecstatic reveries of the earnest and the spiritualized find utterance by a natural process through the press. More convictions are sent home to the minds of men through the press—more resolutions influencing the destinies of the individual are formed by its influence, in one month, than by the pulpit preachings of a

year. What is the influence the most popular divine possesses to the influence of the London Times? What is the influence of Archbishop Whately preaching at St. Patrick's — of Dr. Vaughan preaching at Manchester—to Richard Whately issuing books from the London press, and Robert Vaughan editing the British Quarterly Review? To such a Popedom has literature elevated itself; but, as yet, its followers have not risen *à la hauteur*. They have battled with the pulpit for influence; they have gained and appropriated the influence it possessed; but they have very quietly said nothing about the responsibilities they themselves very zealously attached to that pulpit influence. But if literature is not to sink into a mere bauble—if the nation is to regard authors as beneficent realities, and not useless harlequins only—if the press is to accomplish the glorious harvest the eye of prophetic thought would award it—literary men must rise *à la hauteur*, must boldly and unequivocally take up those responsibilities. Our authors must become preachers, seers, evangelists. The literary man must feel, when he takes up his pen to write, that he is a Priest—that he is performing the great secular Masses of the world. To stand there in his immaterial pulpit, and to survey the mighty congregation his mind's eye can behold beneath him; seeking out their weaknesses and wants, supplying them with strength and consolation; seeking out carefully, and energetically proclaiming the neg-

lected, half-buried truth ; exposing and reprehending the false, with the calm self-possession of decided insight ; breaking in upon the stagnating people, and telling them how good and noble is active, vivifying work, how base and how noxious is indifference or positive crime. With his whole energy of heart and soul—with the full power of intellect and genius—endeavouring, while he seeks to ameliorate the worldly miseries, the material degradations of his kind, to hold up before all men the Divine Ideal as a guiding light to the moral and spiritual man, and with all the might of eloquence to exhort him—Upward.

Such is the mission of the Press and the Vocation of the Literary Man.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SPIRITUAL.

"This people draweth near to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me."

MATTHEW xv. 8 ; ISAIAH xxix. 13.

"Every Stoic was a Stoic ; but in Christendom where is the Christian ?"—EMERSON.

WE now come to the most important portion of our survey. We come to the heart and core of all things ; to the great root of which these symptoms, social, domestic, moral, literary, are but the folious development ;—to the consideration of the Spiritual aspects of our times : a subject on which all thinking men are at present, more or less, absorbed, whether it be in earnest truth-seeking, or in nervous scepticism, or in conventional conformity.

What, I would inquire, is the lowest possible condition for a nation as regards its religion—what the most dangerous spiritual state ? To answer, as many would do, in Paganism, Mahomedanism, Popery, or what not, will not be satisfactory. We must find an answer that shall not be sectarian even on the largest scale ; an answer

that shall embrace all creeds and opinions, all races and all nations. Leaving, therefore, the relative merits of this *ism* or that, let us place it upon this footing—that as the highest state of religious life is when a man sacrifices every personal and worldly advantage, encounters every annoyance or peril, if need be, rather than be in the least untrue to what his soul believes to be his religious faith, the commandments of his God; so also the most thoroughly rotten, the most pregnantly perilous state for a man or a nation to be in, is when the life, speech, and action of that man or nation is in habitual contradiction to the faith they profess to believe in and to follow. That a Christian is a loftier man than a Pagan, few will gainsay; but a sincere Pagan is as surely a loftier, more honourable servant of God than one who is a whole Christian with his lips, but only in his action a Christian so far as is the custom of his country. The conscientiously scrupulous Pagan is an honest man; true also to the measure of his capacity. The temporising, time-serving, lip-professing and deed-denying religionist, of whatever faith, is an impostor, existing under false pretences—a living lie. While, therefore, I will candidly admit that, given two nations both equally earnest and sincere in different religious faiths, that difference may retard the one and advance the other, still I must lay down as the fundamental principle of our spiritual inquiries the axiom, that the sincere Fetish worshipper is better than the insincere

Christian; that the most perilous condition of a people is when they have ceased implicitly to abide by the vital essence of a creed, the miserable skin and shreds of which they obstinately keep around their necks as a poor mimicry of the departed life and spirit.

With this in view, let us endeavour to trace in what relation stands the religious profession of this nation, in this age, with their national tendencies, the national practice, how far the life of the people is a huge, unresting attempt to be true to the divine principles inculcated and enforced by Christ and his apostles.

Without entering into any vexed doctrinal points, narrowing it to the most practical and broadest phase, we can give a short exposition of the Christian faith, of the code of Jesus, from which, as far as it goes, we imagine no religious man will feel disposed to dissent, and which no man can disprove.

The broad principle of Christianity, as exemplified in the life and teachings of Christ, is simply that the religious truth of a man is better than his worldly comfort. That a man should set himself with all the might God has given him to fulfil what he believes to be the law of God; that to do this if it be necessary (and Christ holds out no hope of its becoming speedily unnecessary) he must cast aside father and mother and all earthly ties; must throw away all the allurements of the world, the pomp of station and the luxuries of

wealth; must retire away from the haunts of the profane, and dwell in hunger, cold and danger; must brave all peril, suffer all persecution, be beaten and tortured, and ridiculed and spit upon; and even be slaughtered with all the inhumanities man can inflict, rather than be false to those laws of God—rather than succumb to the allurements of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christianity is a crucifixion of the individual for the good of his fellow-man. Man is shown to be a fact, with an eternity to receive him, with a heaven or a hell awaiting him. He is taught at all times and in all seasons to have this before him; that every opportunity passed by is chronicled against him; every light unmeaning word, and even thought, recorded. He is taught that every man, rich or poor, is his brother, and as good and as much God's son as he; that all pride towards his fellow-man is culpable; that to allow one human being to want and be in misery while he by denying himself can save or solace him, is a crime not hereafter to be overlooked. He is taught the immense, the awful, scarcely bearable responsibility of riches. That it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to be saved; that it is not what a man gives, but how far it personally annoys him, and is a privation unto him; that suffering man has a claim upon his rich brother even to the extent that he should "sell all that he hath and give it to the poor."

Now I do not pretend to enter into the question



of the practicability of these precepts ; but I do pretend to adduce them as precepts unreservedly and unqualifiedly promulgated and commanded by Jesus Christ ; and as this is a Christian nation, a nation and an age of Bibles and Christian-church building, I turn to see as a matter of vital import how far men are endeavouring to realize those precepts in every department of individual and public life. I shall not be very strict in my search ; a very slight effort in that direction will satisfy as to the spiritual honesty of the times.

But, unfortunately, no such satisfaction is in store. For when I turn to the ways of man on every side of me, to the laws and regulations of society, I find such a total, such an habitual neglect of these commands of Christ, such a bold unconcealed opposition to, and transgression of, them—such a wholesale and consolidated reprobation of their spirit, that I am compelled to decide—compelled in sorrow and dismay to decide—that the God of Englishmen is not the spiritual God of their Redeemer, but is an embodiment of the hardest selfishness ; that their God is an union of Mammon and Public Opinion ; their heaven Success in life ; their hell, as the Isaiah of the age has said already, “ Not getting on.”

On every hand we find a respectable conformity to established rules of religious propriety ; but earnest devotion to God we do not find. We find respectable men, breaking no law of society, never overstepping the line of a conventional re-

ligiousness, either by an open flagrant sin, or an energetic good. They conform to some sect, attend its services punctually, pay subscriptions freely and regularly, and run a round of arid respectability with the monotony of machines; never bursting forth into the full, world-despising spontaneity of a spiritual life. And this is what is accounted religion in the world—this is what satisfies the most zealous pastors; and yet is it all a pure matter of social arrangement, as are the forms of introduction, of eating, or of dancing. Men go to church, not to pray, nor to worship; of the idea of the human soul prostrating itself before its eternal Maker, and crying in passionate, David-like fervour for pardon and for strength, they have no conception. It is respectable to go to church, and they go. They give guineas to charities, but such a matter of business is it that, if they be in trade, they mostly place them to their trade expenses as a kind of semi-religious rent or tax; but a leviathanic charity that shall be felt,—a selling of “all that they possess,” they never hear of and never entertain. Nay, have we not this anomaly perpetrated, more or less, in every town, in every clique of men? You shall find a spiritual man, believing in God, in truth, in purity, endeavouring to the best of his ability to stand firm to truth and purity, cost it what it may; actually leading an almost irreproachably Christian life; and yet because simply his conscience forbids him to attend the wor-

ship of a sect, you shall see him subjected to the Englishman's hell, and not "get on," owing to the conventional disapprobation which he incurs by so violating respectability in these matters. At the same time you shall see another, a dissolute, bad, un-Christian man, who does attend, as a form, some church or chapel, looked upon with favour by ministers and by men. It is a fact, that ministers of Christ's gospel, and society at large, prefer a dissolute man who has no worthy ideas of God or religion at all, but who conforms to the church-attending law, and gives his guineas to oil the church machinery, to the vividly religious, good man who cannot so conform. For, as I said, Christianity has sunk into a mere conventional convenience, a worldly arrangement, and has ceased to be a life-and-death eternal fact, superior to all arrangements of society. The world is impatient of the man who is sceptical of Christianity; but it is even more so of the man who believes in it with his whole heart and soul, and would strive, at all costs, to realize it. If God means the principle that sways mankind, surely our God has ceased to be the God of Christ, and is now Conventionality. For let us consider what sensible man speaks the whole truth; what sensible man will imperil his goods or self for his belief, if he have any; what sensible man even performs an action in life, the direct cause of which was an intense desire to realize an injunction of Christ, or a command of God? Do not all men, whom

the world calls sensible, and regards with favour; when they reason at all, reason solely on prudential grounds? And if it should occur that on the Sunday they are told a few truths that should lead them to remodel the plans of the past, is it not considered that it is enough to have been in a place where such truths are spoken? Indeed, there is a tacit understanding that the vital principles of Christianity shall never be alluded to in their clear, naked, practical truth; somewhat as the death of a friend, a sudden and a bitter loss, is kept in silence, unspoken of, lest it cause earnest, unpleasant thoughts. The spirit of diplomacy has been at work in our religion. Two natural enemies have become sworn friends and allies, to avoid a war which might destroy them. The churches, by position, are and should be the unceasing, the incorruptible opponents of our conventional arrangements. They should denounce money-pride, aristocracy and snob-ocracy; they should denounce pride of dress and pride of living; they should denounce the man-despising exclusiveness of rank; they should assert the inalienable nobility of man, descended from the Lord God, and dowered with His bodily and mental gifts; they should demand self-sacrifice, honest religion; not hymn-singing and prayer-making on seventh-day, but the constant upsoaring of a great soul, God-inspired, God-seeking. On the other hand, fashion should set at naught the churches; defy their expostulations and defy

their authority. Then would there be two sides for men to enlist in. The servants of God would rally round the churches and bear their banners; the servants of Ton, of snobbery and etiquette, would rally round their social Belial. And so, with opposite and unmistakable sides, men would make their election swiftly; the pulpit-trumpets and big-throbbing music of attuned and sanctified hearts would sound the war-cry; the scabbard would be thrown aside, and the hosts of heaven would close in a death conflict with the sons of Belial. But there have been traitors in the camp. What force could never have effected has been done by compromise. The soul, and spirit of Paul and John and Peter has been supplanted by the spirit of Talleyrand and Metternich in the apostles' successors. The churches and society have made a pact. "We," say the Churches, "will preach just so much religion as shall have no effect on you; we will never attack you; we will not strive to remodel you; to cleanse and purify your prurience and your sin." "And we," say the gods of Ton, "will be friends to you; we will make it *respectable* to support you; we will join in discountenancing and ruining and annihilating, by ecclesiastical fulminations on your part, and by the cold hauteur of fashionable repudiation on ours, our common enemy—the strong-willed, earnest-souled, uncompromising man, who scorns our social hypocrisies, and joins not in your formalistic worship."

And so has it been latterly, so is it now, so becomes it daily more and more. There are in all the churches, in their respective ministers and in their congregations, many sincere exceptional characters—men who look as fearfully as I on the workings of middle-class life, on the balls, and suppers, and money-worship, and moral ethics of social England. But the religious tendencies of an age are not to be gauged and tested by the exceptions, but by the broad current of society. In estimating our soundness or unsoundness, we must not inquire whether *any* Christian men exist in England; but we must inquire how far society, in its widest aspects, is in conformity with Christianity; how far it tends, given a man to be placed at its disposal to mould and fashion, to make that man a generous glowing Christian man, or a cool, reserved, proud, prudential man of the world. And surely there needs small arguments to decide that question. The carriage of my Lord the Bishop rolls through the city, and the poor are sprinkled with the mud its wheels do scatter. In their costly chariots the proud beauties loll disdainful in the Park, and the very footmen of birth-pride scorn the vulgarity of a descent from God and the nobility of virtue. All men are alike in the eye of God; He knows but the good and evil, they are his sole distinctions, says Christianity: the practice and the feeling of social England says, as clearly as action can speak it, A man, as a man, is nothing; he is in proportion

as he has cash or birth. When you are smitten smite not again, says Christianity, for peace is its vital essence. A peace-man is almost a term of contempt in society; the pulpit is the best support of the war-spirit: and bishops bless the colours that are to be steeped in the blood of man and the tears of orphanage and widowhood. Over the fruitful fields, down-pressing the springing increase of the earth, banishing joy and bringing sorrow, breaking hearts, plundering cities, burning homesteads, murdering and ravishing, pour on the locust armies of avoidable war; and they go on with the colours which a descendant of St. Paul has presented, with the blessings of social religion on the thing they do! Humility is another key-note of Jesus Christ. The wretched Pharisee with his pride; the Publican (the social unmoneyed man now-a-days) with his humility; the degradation of the self-elevated, the promotion of the lowlier minded; these are salient features in his evangel. And yet, what is rank and the arrangements of precedence, and, above all, selectness in society, but one vast round of the basest, the emptiest of pride? The peer does not associate harmoniously with the baronet; the baronet rather scorns the squire; the squire discards the smaller landed gentleman; the landed gentleman associates not with the manufacturing millionaire; the manufacturing millionaire hardly notices his smaller compeers; the small compeer cuts the shopkeeper. It is one great series of

despisings, and contempt, and pride. And not contempt for vice or crime, or even ignorance; the despised is generally as good and as wise as the despiser; but for not having a traceable pedigree, for not having the requisite cash balances.

It were, indeed, idle to follow out this system of juxtaposition. Can the reader suggest any social arrangement likely to aid Christianity; any compatible with it; any not, more or less, in hostility to its teachings? A practical infidelity is abroad, in the face of an increase of churches and ministers unequalled in religious history. Nationally we are now Atheists. This is seen and felt in the workings of the most gifted and devout of orthodox believers. They see this anomalous position, and they strive after some fashion to cure it. The Episcopalian feels the want, and seeks its remedy in retrogression; endeavouring to enkindle a flame from the half-dead social embers by the rainbowed light of an exploded Catholicism; the Nonconformist seeks to reanimate society, to impregnate it anew, by a fusion of sects; the nervous men of all parties, after much self-examination, and doubt, and difficulties, fall into a mild scepticism, and shriek their parting wail in strange utterances of ill-digested misgivings; and the philosophic religionist takes his stand apart, and looks with heavy heart and anxious eye towards the horizon to hail a better day-star whenever it shall rise. Thus are all who are not dead with society. They feel and they



see what every spiritual man whose eyes are unveiled must see, that England is now in that lowest state of religious life laid down in the beginning of this chapter; that she professes Christianity, insists on Christianity being professed, is intolerant to the last degree against non-professors, and yet, in all her intricate machinery, in all her social arrangements, utterly repudiates in fact, what she so maintains in principle; is guided by fashion, by prudence, by custom, but never by Christianity; that she holds with her lips what her actions belie; that she is, in short, in her religious matters, a mockery, an hypocrisy, a living falsehood. The Hindoos, the Chinese, the Africans, in these respects are sounder men than we!

## CHAPTER X.

### RETROSPECT AND SUMMARY.

THE reader will remember the tendency of the principles inculcated in the first division of this attempt.

By the aid of a broad survey of history, conclusions were arrived at, with which the consideration of the social manifestations of our times are intimately connected, and which must serve as a guide in the conclusions we have now to draw. It was then seen that the political machinery, the external wrappings of a people's life, are not the sole causes, nor even leading causes, in a people's prosperity or decline; but that it is amid the quieter portion of existence, in the social workings of the people, that the causes of their strength or their debility are most surely to be traced. We found that when Greece and Rome and the Italian republics were in their strength, firm in a noble, rock-like independence, unsubdued by fraud within or force without, that their men were of a simple upright nature; that social sophistry had not undermined natural morality and manliness; that frugality and simplicity characterized their domestic life; that

they revered man as a *Being* rather than a *Having*; that, above all, what religion they did with their lips profess, they did in their hearts fervently believe, and, to the best of their ability, honestly and fully carried into action. And when the decadent period of their histories came on, the signs of a departure from these ways of life were in no case wanting; nay, stood so glaringly forth in their literature and their habits, as to cause some wonder that the dangerous metamorphosis was not perceived, and exposed, and abandoned. We found that the religion became a dishonesty. Men did not conform to its dictates. They did not believe in its truth; but they maintained it in intolerance and in obstinate resistance, as a convenience and respectability. Social life also changed. Its privacy was outraged. Huge gatherings and glittering display, brilliant nothings and empty flatteries, ostentatious ornaments and meretricious art, confronted strong-pulsed friendship, comfort and convenience, true-hearted words and deeds, and plain garments, and pure, beautiful and elevating literature and art—confronted, battled, conquered. And as they conquered the nation declined. Men who had not the self-denial, the resolution to resist sensuous temptations, who could not ward away the invasion of luxury into the domain of strength and honesty, could not, naturally enough, resist other enemies and invasions of a more directly forceful character. When the pear is internally

sound, not all the winds of heaven can compress its compact resisting form ; but when the pear is internally unsound, not all the external appliances of the most skilful gardener, in the mildest atmosphere, can prevent it from collapsing.

The cause of this internal unsoundness in nations was seen to be the excess of civilization—refinement, polish, pushed beyond its wholesome limits into an ultra-refinement. An ideal of what man should be, was seen also. That he should be fearless, upright, pious ; bending to no idol of etiquette in preference to God ; stooping to no social lies, no money-pride, no arrogance ; but with his whole heart and soul fearlessly and truly seeking out his duty, and as fearlessly and as truly acting out that duty. And we have now to see how far our present social state, as we have analyzed it, bears a resemblance to the decay-era of our predecessors in world-empire ; how far the tendency of society is to create such men as have been sketched, to encourage and reward them ; how far these are affected by a difference of time, situation, and race ; what, in a word, the future of this country is to be.

The rise, progress, and decline of classes in a country is one of the most interesting topics to which the historical student can devote himself. Interesting is it in a double point of view. It is interesting to mark the gradual self-assertion of down-trodden masses of a people ; their growing

power, and the growing weakness of the decaying class; the perilous crisis which inevitably occurs when the rising class first strives to exercise its long-matured, established power; the manner in which that crisis is overcome, or the peculiar way in which its ill adjustment rends asunder the body of the nation. And in no country is the gradual, fluctuous rise and progress of successive crises; the struggles and dangers and imminent peril when they were being battled for; the ultimate triumph of the good sense of the nation and of the rising party, which always have been identical; in no country is all this so interestingly, so clearly and strongly marked as in our own.

Let us date from the Conquest. William came over from Normandy, surrounded by men whose names have become identified with our ideas of prowess, pride, tyranny, and unbounded wealth. The names of the great Barons to whom the Conqueror parcelled out this western Canaan strike a certain thrill into our hearts as we read them, as the very impersonations of splendour and of power. But they were powerful downwards, and not upwards. They hanged Saxons, they made them slaves, they flayed Jews and raped maidens; but they did not much annoy William or his immediate successors. The state was he truly. He was the dominant class. But he drove a chariot with high-blooded horses, such as a Jehu could only control, and which could only be controlled by driving furiously. So that, very shortly after

the Conqueror's death, the great class of the Barons began to rise. Not very perceptibly at first, nor rapidly, but certainly: Gradually their power strengthened, and their thirst for independent power; until, under the reign of John, the kingship became the decadent, and the Baronage the dominant class. They bearded the king, and they wrested from him Magna Charta — a bill containing the palladium of liberty, when interpreted as applying to the people at large, but meaning, in those days, freedom of action for the Barons. But this was not done without the country being reduced to the very verge of ruin. Before a birth can take place, she in whom the struggle is pained out must be brought to the very jaws of dissolution; and it hinges on the skill of her attendants whether or no she and her offspring share one common grave. So before Magna Charta could be established, before the risen class could reign, England had to see her fairest counties harried, her sons slain, a foreign army land upon her shore, and her name become a by-word at Paris and at Rome.

Checked at times by unduly powerful kings, and by other circumstances, the power of the Baronage was long maintained: often was it autocratic, as when a few peers beheaded the king's favourite in a little hollow on a Warwickshire moor; and never, even under the most vigorous Edward, was it cowed or silent. Its influence endured until it blazed up in a stupendous death-

pyre, in the person of the generous, the savage, the indomitable King-maker. After that we hear little more of the Baronage. It, too, had declined ; but it had not died easily ; the bloodiest section of the British annals, the most disastrous chapter in our history, was the death-field of the ascendancy of the baronial class. Thinned in numbers and in resources, when the wars of the Roses were concluded, there was nothing left but for the Crown to assume the dominion it had previously lost. But this must not be regarded as an absolute retrogression. It was not an absolute triumph of monarchy. The class under the Barons were not ripe for power ; but they were sufficiently advanced to feel no desire for the perpetuity of the Baronial ascendancy. Nay, one cause of the death of that ascendancy was the rising of the under class. The King, therefore, absorbed the Baronage, as it were, and thenceforth the two classes were virtually represented in his person.

Then ensues a long period of the domination of this double power, until an under grade had matured itself, and could face that power in the person of Charles ; and, after half a century of troubles, utterly and for ever banish it in the person of his second son. Neither was this done without danger. Ten years of a civil war, in which one house was divided against itself, father against son, mother against daughter, husband against wife, until the land reeked with animosities, speciosities, licentious swagger, religious

excesses, and continued and extensive bloodshed. Then a vigorous and a glorious interregnum of despotism; the victorious class drunk with its success, and making merry in the habiliments torn from the body of the defeated. Then a wild reaction; monarchy restored; harlots and panders and blasphemers installed with it; a reign of everything that is most ruffianly, mean, detestable, filthy, and utterly execrable in the human constitution. Then tyranny of another phase, of sullen, narrow bigotry, combined with the blood-thirstiness of tigers and the impotence of dotage, filled the country with misery and shame. Finally, another slight war, a foreign invasion. Through such a fearful half-century (century we might say, for it began with James I.) had England to struggle, before the combined powers of King and Barons could be entirely overthrown, and the English Squirearchy win for themselves a legitimate place and influence in the nation.

It is ridiculous to imagine that the class who now rose, through so much dismay and danger, was the Middle Class. It was certainly the Middle Class in those days; but it no more answers to the Middle Class of our time, than the Barons of Magna Charta to the Burleighs, Essexes, and Buckingham of Elizabeth and James. It was the squirearchy; the landed untitled. Hampden was a squire; Cromwell much the same thing. Indeed, all the chief men who headed that noblest crusade in British story were knights of the shire



and landowners. The Middle Class, *our* Middle Class, did not begin to rise till near a century later; they did not rise till the squirearchy grew corrupt and worthless; and it is owing to the fact, that there were still under classes with life in them to rise, that England owes her existence at this present moment.

In 1750 the prospects of England were as gloomy as the prospects of a great nation could be, to those who confined their scrutiny to the then Middle Class. It was irreligious, licentious, extravagant; false to its core. Its revenues were diminished by lavish expenditure; its spirit was morbid with Della Cruscan imbecility and French atheism. Looking at society in England in those days, it did not appear that she had any vital energy remaining in her; it did not appear that, if a great coalition were framed against her, she would have spirit and energy enough to withstand it. Nor would she. Had there been no class rising in all speed to the utmost strength of manly vigour, no other class than that impoverished and unnatural-lived society which had its head-quarters in London, and of which the novels and biographies of that period give glimpses, to bear up against Napoleon, England would, in all probability, have been "another isle of Oleron to France." But there was a rising class in England. The present Middle Class was then in the heyday of youth, and bore upon its ample shoulders the tottering fortunes of the country. It was the supply of

money that saved England, and it was by the credit of that rising Middle Class, and by that only, that the necessary moneys were obtained. I do not call the sons of little squires, long descended but untitled, the Middle Class; I call the Middle Class those who, fifty, eighty, or a hundred years ago, were down among the lowest of the people. The children and grandchildren of those butchers, bakers, small drapers, manure-gatherers, Scotch pedlars, and journeymen tinkers, who arose with the cotton trade and its numberless ramifications; those Liverpool brokers, Manchester manufacturers, Yorkshire wool-spinners, London merchants, Hull and Bristol traders, Norwich, Coventry, Nottingham, and Leicester manufacturers, large rural towns retail merchants, coal proprietors, copper-miners, clerks, bankers, lawyers, all of which rose, in countless shoals and with astounding strength, with the great spread and growth of the cotton trade. Carlyle has said "Richard Arkwright carried us through the Peninsular war. He and his cotton could do that." This, at first sight, seems but one of the splendid exaggerations of that wonderful mind; but on investigation it is literally true. The men who in various ways were concerned in the cotton trade, some so distantly that you could hardly see how that trade influenced them at all, and yet who owed everything to it, found such a lucrative field for the employment of their money and their energies in England, that it was cheap to them

to give any sum to maintain the inviolability of that field. Hence they endorsed the bills that provided the sinews of the war abroad; while, at home, their strong sense, their simple lives, their honesty and sincerity made them the adjusting weight of the national machinery; the iron bars which kept the mob from the Regalia! If any class of the community have right particularly to the name of *the People*, it is that great Middle Class. Uneducated, unenfranchised, undeveloped, the mighty class of operatives underneath them have been but as a chaotic ocean, upon whose stormy and bituminous waters that Middle Class has sailed triumphant. They it was who carried the Reform Bill, who repealed the Corn Laws, who made the Railways, and by them is it that our future destinies are to be estimated. Hence, in surveying Social England, I have purposely narrowed my observations to that class.

And now, what is the result of those observations? How is it with that class? Are the qualities which made them the Atlas to Great Britain in her hour of need, as strong as ever in their hearts and minds, and growing stronger with their increase and the increase of their possessions? Alas! not so. The Middle Classes are swiftly deteriorating from their vigorous strength into a helpless imbecility. All the elements of decay and ruin are to be found in them, as fully and in as deadly a manner, as in falling Athens, declining Rome, and France upon the eve of a Reign of

Terror. The preceding chapters, scattered and disjointed as they seem, yet blend themselves into one complete whole—an elaborate, closely-welded scheme of dissolution. First we have the apathetic coma-sleep of the Religious principle. Men no longer value the behests of their own souls above the allurements of fashion and the accumulation of wealth. Worship has grown a conventionality and a matter of etiquette, and Conventionality and Etiquette are syrens, in whose embrace no spiritual life can endure. The Christian religion is as much a sham and an imposture among us now, as was the Pagan when in Athens the gods figured at once in burnt-offerings and farces; as it was in Rome, where the Augurs and Pontifices Maximi sneered at the rites as they performed them; as was the Catholic when Leo and his satellites sang hymns to Venus in the very city of St. Peter, and jeered and jested at mysteries, for disbelief in which they roasted manlier doubters; as it was in France when priests and prostitutes were sworn allies, when Voltaire was scouted for denying a religion which his persecutors' nation denied, and scouted and profaned in action. There is in society as intolerant an assertion of the Christian Faith as the spirit of the age will permit; there is every species of moral persecution, slighting, scorning, and slandering brought to bear upon the conscientious doubter, and there is in all our social manifestations no one trace of a great God-seeking, fashion-

scorning attempt to act out that glorious Faith. This is the radical evil. The heart is diseased; the blood sent forth is black, and no cosmetics can keep excrescences from appearing on its face.

Religion no longer the motive spring of action, selfishness must infallibly be the ruling power. The qualities of the human heart which it is the peculiar mission of Religion to keep under, and to counteract by the evolution of holier qualities, religious restraint once withdrawn, regain their supremacy over the national action. Self-denial, spiritual effort, charity, and purity decline; selfishness, bodily luxury, display, and laxity take their place. Hence we find the domestic life metamorphosed into a wretched struggle for fashionable display. The body is no longer kept strong and healthful to keep alive in strength and health the soul; but mind, and soul, and morality are distorted in an abject prostration to the meretricious adornments of the body and its habitations. A man necessarily is no longer measured by the only equitable standard, his qualities and his character, but by what he possesses. An unmeaning and a dangerous standard of domestic life is raised. Obstacles are raised before marriage; celibacy and profligacy ensue. The obstacles being the work of society, it cannot condemn its own products; the profligacy is authoritatively tolerated; a man may claim a licence society declares; and though a woman know her lover to be depraved to the core, she must be supposed

not to know it, and marry him all the same. Lavish expenditure, large parties, gay habiliments, these being the goal to which society directs her votaries, these being the cardinal virtues known alone, and money being the sole power required to procure these, Money becomes our God. An extent and a servile baseness of Mammon-worship, unknown in the history of the world, has come over us. The man with money cannot sin. The man without money cannot be tolerated. To a high-souled virtuous man with a moderate income, our virgins are taught to be cold and repulsive ; but an emasculated debauchee may stride through the marriage market-place, with his money bags in his arms, and buy wherever he may choose. The Juggernaut of Mammon rolls in glory through the land, and mothers cast their children under its wheels ; priests of Christ Jesus prostrate themselves before it ; men grow prematurely gray in its arduous worship ; women scheme and wreck their high hearts and tender souls to gain its favour ; and maidens repair to it as repaired the Ephesian maidens to the temple there, willing, in the service of the god, to surrender their souls and bodies for pollution. Then follows a system of deputed action, ever ripe in decadent empires. A reliance upon the paid services of others, rather than the energetic exertions of a manly independence. Men without cash are found ready to pray, to give charity, to think, for a consideration ; men with cash, in order that the sleek

routine of easy gentility may be preserved unbroken, are willing to pay that consideration, and so have their praying, and alms-giving, and thinking transacted for them. Lastly, after the root has been found decayed and diseased, the stem unsound, the branches withering, we find also that the leaves and flowers—our literature—are also tainted. An elegant, equable, clever literature; but one of essentially shallow thought and light empiricism. A literature whose manner is well-nigh perfect, but whose matter is such as neither can be heartily loved nor heartily condemned.

Such is the result of these inquiries. A result which fully justifies the sounding of the alarm, and the declaration that the “State is in danger.” There is danger when a hostile array threatens invasion. But there is a danger deadlier than that; it is when there is an internal canker silently gnawing away the principles of life. This canker we have at work within our social frame. It has proceeded so far, it is following so clearly the track it has heretofore followed in its mission of Nation-destroyer, that, without any natural tendency to an alarmist, without any despondency, without bating an atom of hopeful courage in behalf of the destinies of man, I cannot avoid deliberately concluding that, were this an age of the Sack of Nations, and were some multitudinous kindred, fresh from Danish forests or Hungarian wilds, led by some Hengist, or Alaric, or Attila, to land, as of old, upon our Yorkshire coast, and,

strong in their great facts of want of food and room for increase, to rush over this self-glorifying England, I cannot believe that, despite all our churches, despite all our social splendour, despite our hired deputies, our yeomanries and militias, and special constabularies, with only sickly formalism and mechanical deadness to oppose unto a torrent of raging life, that we could do other than fly before them, and the mighty empire of Great Britain be as the fallen empires of Persia and Rome.

But the day of barbarian irruptions has passed away. England will never perish by a physical power. With all the territorial might, with all the military power of Russia, that colossal braggart will never humble England by the force of its armies. That era has happily departed. But the endurance of empires has not become eternal; the inexorable law of Death has not been taken away. There are other means of ruin besides the sword; there are other means of effecting the ruin of corrupt peoples besides that of incursive nomads. England, the first great empire of a new era, must be the one to give the first example of how, in this new era, great empires fall. She may be, even now, on the eve of giving that example.

There is an opinion abroad that the British empire can never decay. That England is to go on from glory to glory; that she is to be the one harbour of refuge in a disorganised and distracted world; that she is to become the one vast heart



from which the commercial arteries shall receive their life: these are opinions which British vanity has created, and implanted firmly in the British prejudice. All these things may come; with judicious pilotage may be almost secured. But, however likely the brave vessel be to sail triumphant to the happiest haven, will the true captain neglect to keep a clear outlook for all probable reefs and shoals—will he neglect the due precautions when the skies lower, the winds blow, the timbers yawn, and the waves inundate, however slightly, the striving ship? Neither must we neglect this our gallant Ocean Monarch. It is the peculiar province of every honest gifted man in England to guard her against all dangers, to give a clear warning of their approach, to summon all true men within her to their posts.

England is an old country. She has had a long reign and a wide one. Millions have owned her empire, millions trace their descent to her, and millions speak her language. *Primâ facie*, this is against her. We do not find any warrant for supposing that the same law which has visited animals, fruits, men, and empires from the foundation of the world has ceased to act. It acts visibly still with the vegetable and the animal kingdoms, and with the individual man; and there is no reason to presume that it has ceased to govern empires. Therefore, when a nation is an old empire, there is a strong presumptive argu-

ment against her long duration ; a cogent reason for extra precautions and safeguards. England is an old nation, and she has the peculiar difficulties of an old nation stronger and more marked than in any other empire of which we read. In her political body she is paying the penalty of decades of juvenile profligacy and folly. She has the largest national debt that has ever been accumulated by any kingdom in the world. She has an infinitude of component parts, far scattered and of hostile natures ; colonies more extensive than herself ; colonists more numerous than her proper sons, kept in leash with her, but jarring and unharmonious, striving with the chain, and longing to break it and tear asunder from her. She has within herself all those discordant elements which seem inevitable to old nations. Immense wealth in juxtaposition with abject poverty ; class interests and class prejudices ; the lingering relics of a still semi-dominant feudalism fighting the battle of feudalism ; the mighty power of the ruined middle classes fighting the battle of self-exaltation, and the preservation of their farms, and mills, and privileges ; a multitudinous working class, with precarious means of sustenance, deep-rooted feelings of wrongs sustained, seething and fermenting with a fearful activity down in their alley cauldrons in the large black town, seeking their emancipation and their self-assertion, and longing for the day of combat.

These are the unmistakable symptoms of a diseased frame ; of a frame so diseased, that a year's nostrum treatment might make it moribund.

But there are also other signs of danger. It appears that the new phase of national ruin is to be revolution rather than irruption ; that the Goths and Huns that are in future to wreck nations will be internal Goths, the products of national sin and folly. Owing to England's insular position, her dangers have been hitherto of this internal kind to a smaller degree. Dangers there have been in England ; storms and tempests which she has ably weathered : they have arisen, as was seen, when a dominant class grew decadent ; they were weathered because there was ever a brave, healthy, uprisen class prepared and ready to supply their place. How is it now ? Class after class has arisen and decayed, and now the dominant class of this day, the Middle Class, has decadent and unhealthy signs. The great question then is, is the under class ready adequately to supply their place ? Is the upper class wise enough to spare England the disorders of the preceding conflicts, by ceding in time the reins it is no longer fit to hold ?

The present imminent dangers of England are twofold, and are these. There is danger in the middle classes continuing, with the purblind infatuation of an ultra-refined decay, to stand obstinately in their pride of place, when all worthy energy has gone from them, in the teeth of a cla-

morous and discontented under class, and so producing another death-birth era, which may in all likelihood be not a death-birth, but a double death. And there is danger even if they perceive their incompetency at the right time, and the under classes harmoniously receive their new-won station ; because, in the great fluctuous rise and fall of classes in our history, we shall have arrived at the lowest class, beyond which it is not possible to go. When a man has a purse filled with gold, he takes out piece after piece unthinkingly enough ; but when he pays away the last piece but one, and finds only one solitary coin between starvation and himself, he begins to regard the case as desperate, and to look about with all the energy he possesses to discover in what way he can postpone the impending ruin. So is it now with us. If, as in all human probability it will be, the middle classes spin down the descent with increasing swiftness, and if without a crisis the under class take their place, it will then be within the power of human calculation to estimate the period of the fall of Britain ; the length of her empire being then simply until the miserable, barren, enervating influences which wrecked the middle classes have done their work upon their successors. In plain truth, the only hope, the only chance of a salvation of our country in such a time, would be in confronting this spread of ostentation, of snobbery, of unbelief, of conventional deadness, in its efforts upon the upper class ; in fanning into flame,

and maintaining in wholesome heat, a piety, an earnestness, a strength of character, and an independence of thought and action, in our final class; the want whereof and the possession of their opposite qualities have wrecked all preceding classes, and all anterior empires. And if this must be done then, how much better that it should be attempted now. How much wiser that the energy and wisdom of Britain should be employed in arousing the asphyxied middle classes, not hopelessly dead as yet to worthy life, than to let them sleep out their pleasant snow sleep, the end of which is death; and compelled as an only chance of existence to do the same thing with their successors when failure must be total ruin!

The end of this book, then, is to proclaim danger; the feather has been flung up, and we find that Euroclydons and Siroccos are abroad. And we find that with a lazy dreaming crew there is small hope for the salvation of the vessel. This Ocean Monarch drifting among the breakers demands an energetic crew, cannot spare a single hand from the necessary labour. Deeper and deeper does she sink; higher and higher is the water in her hold. A few on board see the danger; but one-half of the crew is boisterously rude and ignorant of all vital knowledge; and the other half, that has the power to save, the means and the influence and the knowledge, lolls listlessly in the saloons amid perfumes and delicacies, lisping a languid "let us alone" to all who come to warn

them. Nay more : such heaps of fashionable fripperies have they ; such a chaos of packages, of pier-glasses, rouge-pots and épergnes, that the one chief cause of the vessel's foundering is the ponderosity of their accumulated trash. Who shall gainsay, therefore, that the only chance for this poor Ocean Monarch is that the uncultivated portion be taught to assist as speedily as may be ; and that the fripperies of the others be cast remorselessly overboard, and their owners shaken into life, so that they shall leave their dreamy saloons and come and save the vessel ?

Reader ! Reader ! all the talk of the Sun of England never setting, about her being the mighty workshop of the world, is nothing better than vain-glorious cant. We are no more particularly the sons of God than are the hundred peoples that dwell upon this globe. And even if our sun is not to set, if England is to be the workshop of the world, is that to be compassed by letting us drift on unguided, or by skilfully steering ourselves through inevitable casualties, by eradicating the bad, and by strengthening the good ? The man who trusts his private fortunes to chance, leans upon a reed more broken than Pharaoh king of Egypt ; and the nation can only fare the same. As in the physical body disease is known by its signs, and as the more skilful the physician, the more acquainted is he with the bearings of the smallest symptoms upon the whole ; so in the body politic and social, death is forerun by disease, and

disease by its attendant symptoms. Hence facts, such as have been chronicled here, are not mere nothings that will right themselves, but are symptoms with causes and tendencies; symptoms not to be overlooked, but to be studied carefully and honestly. The smallest has its meaning.

If we see a large class of men, who have for half a century been emphatically England, casting aside all worthy endeavour, all true manlike action, and devoting themselves, body and soul, to ape all that is most hollow and contemptible and insincere in the classes above them, and studying only how to procure the means whereby those upper classes shall be eclipsed and rivalled;—

If we find that a rigid exclusiveness has grown dominant in that class; an exclusiveness not founded on any meritorious quality of intellect or of character, but based solely upon the possession of money, however won, without consideration as to loveability or detestableness of its possessor;—

If we find that no cry of distress, no high-souled *principle* can incite this class to action, but that the only plea upon which they can be stirred into a certain sluggish ferment, is one founded on selfishness and all the basest and most contemptible qualities of man's nature; that they will loll over their wine-cups, send out their invitation cards for overgrown assemblies, and pile up their mansions on the hill-sides of

the towns wherein they hoarded up their gold, and seeing it thus all right with *them*, that *they* have wine, house and political emancipation, will pay no heed to the bitter and frequent appeals that cry out, shrill and terrible, from town hamlets, from the lips of unhappy thousands, to the callous heart of man, and to the just and vengeance-taking ear of God;—

If we find, as we do find, employment becoming daily scarcer and scarcer in proportion to population; if we find pauperism swelling with population, and leaping up frightfully in our periodical crises of commerce; if we find that intelligent men, sent forth by a spirited and thankworthy newspaper, give reports of the state of the great working people that strike horror into all feeling hearts, and grave apprehensions into all thinking minds, and that make religious men feel that it cannot be long well with a country containing such foul inhumanities; that with such fearful unalluviated miseries we do not deserve God's blessing, nor can obtain it, but that ere long He will take up the cause of that long-neglected, long-suffering, long-enduring class, who toil their hard and brief period, and then retire into alleys and bastiles to die; will take up the cause of the poor Spitalfields weaver, and of the poor needlewoman, and of the miserable uninstructed child, fallen into thievery and crime; and of the poor outcasts of prurient sham-virtue, driven to immoral traffic, to disease and speedy death, by a harsh and indefen-



sible social law; that God Almighty will take up the cause of these unfortunates and avenge them fearfully: and if when all this is being announced, when all honest men are speaking and thinking of it, we find this Middle Class clinging to their flesh-pots and social hypocrisies, and hear in the North—in Manchester and Halifax and elsewhere—that the season has been “unusually gay;”—

And if, lastly, we find Dissenters, grown wealthy, sneaking round to the Church because it is respectable, a severer tone of orthodox profession pervading society, and a corresponding diminution of Christian practice; if we find men intolerant of any questioning of Christianity, but whose whole lives and motives of action are opposed to that Christianity of which they are tenacious:—

If we find all these symptoms,—and none can deny their existence,—surely it betokens a dilapidated and disordered body; nor does it take a very far-sighted physician to perceive that, if allowed unchecked to work out their natural ending, it must end in the collapse and death of that recreant Middle Class, and in the severe distraction, and probably death, of this brave, old, ill-fated Britain.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUSIONAL.

“Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range.  
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of  
change.”

TENNYSON.

AND yet, when we look abroad on “Merry” England, and see her rich and garden-like luxuriance; when we gaze upon the blue unwatered hills of Derbyshire, and the damp coal-fields of Lancashire; on the wild gray loveliness of Yorkshire, and the teeming granaries of the south. When we regard her castles, her cathedrals, her relics, the Tower, Windsor, Westminster, York, the house at Stratford, and at Lichfield, and at Chalfont; Runnymede and Worcester, and Bannockburn; silent memorial orators, more eloquent than the highest human utterance. When we behold the strong Saxonhood still beaming forth from the stalwart forms and the massive intelligent faces of the uncorrupted portion of the people. When we cast a retrospective eye over the glorious list of noble souls who have fought out their great fight here, winning us abiding privileges, and recollect that behind us in the misty past stand gazing affectionately upon us

our Shakspeare, Raleigh, Sidney, Milton, Cromwell, Chaucer, Warwick, Henry V., Cœur de Lion, Johnson, and Chatham, and Canning, and a proud array of thinkers and doers, unsurpassed in all the history of man, bearing aloft the emblazoned oriflamme of Britain's glory, and inciting us, their fainting, failing children, to new endeavours and to as lofty victories.—When we consider all this, the heart rises in rebellion against the head, and cannot entertain the thoughts of the decline of a country so ennobled; and though the head suggests that Greece, and Rome, and Italy had their mighty men as well as we, and yet fell, still the heart insinuates a hope against hope, —whispering that perchance all these evil signs may be as fleeting mists, which a sun-burst shall speedily drive away.

This heart's whisper receives some little strength, when we come to consider what the course of England should be if she is to go on increasing in power and in glory. For we then find that all the signs and metamorphoses here noticed are not retrograde movements, but are steps forward, though not in the proper path. If allowed to follow out their present course, to pursue their present path, the may-be of it all is ruin. But given an improved spirit, given a revived energy, and religion in the people, and this dangerous path may be made to blend harmoniously with the safe and noble one, leading directly to a lofty should-be. We are in a chrysalis state. The

honest homely caterpillar form is put off, and in a new guise we lie in dirt and putrefaction, and only time can show whether we shall emerge brighter and fairer far, or, lacking the strength to burst our bondage, shall perish in our self-created prison. *All existing indications may not be absolute evils, but necessary transitions through evil unto good.*

In the domestic life of the Middle Classes, noble as their former existence was in comparison to their present selfish, betinselled slumber-life, still it was essentially of a gross, material character; and, though a strong healthy fact, was very far from approaching the highest ideal of domestic life. In that old manner of existence, woman was chiefly considered as a cooker of meats, a washer of clothes, a regulator of a household, and a bearer of children. All things were regarded in the most utilitarian aspect. What was not absolutely necessary was pushed on one side with scorn; and an idea of any necessities beyond physical ones—of the wants and demands of the soul—was seldom or never entertained. Now, what was wanting to perfect that life was a due introduction of a sound appetite for things beyond utilitarian necessities, of a taste for Art in general, of a true and comprehensive Spirituality;—an introduction of these, but an intact maintenance of the sturdy independence, the sincerity, the honesty of life, that formed the ground-work of the other existence. It has been seen how lament-

ably the latter have been sapped, how little of the former have been introduced. Making dress the sole end of female thought; party-giving the main object of matrimony; rivalry in extravagance the primal cause of the emulative faculty; women the flickering candle, around which the social man-moths flicker and burn:—this is a species of non-utilitarianism that was not wanted, and the natural ending of which is death. But yet is it an assertion that something beyond utilitarian life is demanded by the soul of man. Are not brilliant parties, taste in dress, the cultivation of Bunn's ballad-music, épergnes and anti-macassars, and the wants that these satisfy, protests against mere toiling, humdrum, bodily living? Are they not artistic tastes and idealities of some fashion? They are not what we want; in themselves they are precisely what we did *not* want; and there is little prospect, at present, of their becoming what we do want. But their introduction has washed us from the hard, material sand-bank on which we lay secure, but stranded; and though they have borne us into the very jaws of Scylla and Charybdis, they have made us *afloat*; and if the crew but see their danger, have actually eased our path to those fair Archipelagos, where lie the Utopias and Atlantides which the intellect of man has ever imaged, and shall some day realize.

From the meretricious gew-gaws of existing society might easily come forth a lofty taste for artistic efforts, for sculpture and painting, and

poetry and music, ennobling the promoters and the country. Not an insane running after seventh-rate copy-originals of ancient masterpieces, but a liberal patronage of present art, in the decorations of dwellings with the statues and paintings of native and existing genius, struggling, alas! in vain. Then would our merchant-princes rival those old Italian merchants whose taste and liberality fostered, if not created, the grand *chef-d'œuvres* of the world. Then also would our Haydons have no need to die self-slaughtered. From this light indifference to the proper duties of married life, might so easily come forth that beautiful blending of the two minds, the bodily and the spiritual, when it would be understood that while all the material duties of matrimonial existence remain unshaken—while the household comforts, the rearing and production of offspring, are still God-appointed duties—there is yet a higher union whereof that lower routine is only typical, a union of the male soul with the female soul, fusing into one lovely spirit, and struggling upward to the Godlike and to God.

In the matter of Morality also is a dualistic aspect. The easiest course is for conventional sham-virtue to increase its prurient purity of tone, and for the light licentiousness, the sneaking beastliness, the foul diseased profligacy of the hidden but general and increasing practice, to follow steadily their respective paths until the social character become demoralized and cor-

rupt unto its core, and the whole framework burst asunder. This is the more probable—the natural and easy termination of such a commencement. But there is hope that the hidden violation of the social dicta on these matters may go on increasing in flagrancy and force, until, at last, the barren meaningless dicta themselves be called in question; examined, weighed, tested, found wanting, and flung to the winds as empty trumpery:—that out of it may come the discrimination to see that a rose-pink atmosphere of delicacy in gay assemblies is not purity in itself but is the rankest impurity when it conceals the vice that is beneath it; when it shall be seen and acted upon, that purity is the quality we need, and not the ignoring of vice merely, and the cant of purity, as is now the case; but that it is the best, at any cost, to have men as they are, undisguised, that they may be known for what they are, and the state of the nation may be no cunningly-concealed mystery, as it is at present:—when, also, the divine significance of marriage may be known and practised, and the superstitious twaddle that now envelopes it be blown away; when it shall be understood that the ceremony is no magical magician's wand-waving to sanctify what is sinful, to purify and legalize adultery and crime; when it shall be felt that the fallen women-angels, sore tempted and long-resisting, are not the impurest of their sex, but that these sale-marriages, these bought brides, are but legalized seductions

and society-tolerated harlots :—when a charitable and discriminating morality, based upon the natural wants of man, shall banish that hellish system of the persecution of unfortunate maidens that renders our Christian England, in such respects, the most fiendish, pagan, and un-Christian land over which the blue skies bend :—when no more the poor unfortunate, for the weakness of an hour shall be branded with the bitter curse of her sex's hatred, be declared inadmissible to penitence, be driven out homeless, friendless, penniless, to perish in cold and hunger, or to plunge into a wretched routine of polluted life, and die prematurely, unloved, unloveable, unloving. A true morality may thus arise, founded upon the ineradicable requirements and tendencies of our complex and various natures, and based upon a broad, healthy, uncondemning groundwork of Charity and of Love.

When a despot gives to a people an education in slavery, he places arms in their hands to annihilate his despotism. The education in itself is bad ; but it is an education, and, once begun, will work out its own God-ordained ending, uncontrolled by giver or recipient. Thus, though the education bestowed upon our women is wretched to the core ; though its direct tendency on the present race is to annihilate every good and strong quality, all nobility and virtue ; yet is it still an acknowledgment that the Middle-Class woman is not the mere cleaning and breeding animal she was considered



a little time ago to be, but is an intellectually gifted being, with intellectual wants and necessities. And with due care and due spirit a transition may be effected from the present body-and-soul enervating system of education, into a system of judicious tutelage, which, training into full-blown hardihood and beauty, the undeveloped female intellect, shall win for woman her ransom from the unjust and anomalous position in which she has so long remained a willing slave. With the cant about the mental sameness and equality of woman, I have no sympathy. Woman is essentially different from man; is his inferior in energy, in grasp, in abiding strength of intellect and of will. Her mission is not the Camp, nor the Senate, nor the Bar, nor the Platform. But she has a peculiar intellect, a soft, harmonious, delicate, persisting truthfulness of mental and moral nature, unacknowledged in a broad social manner, and which places her as man's full equal as a complete being; there existing between them a mutual supplying of different deficiencies. Giving, therefore, any education to woman, is placing in her hands the intellectual sword wherewith, if things go better than they give sign of just now, she may—all good and generous men assisting her—assert her own free right to be guided and governed by the same laws of morals and manners as man, be the same strict or loose. She may thereby abolish all the innumerable differences in every insignificant branch of life created

by man's spirit of autocracy, and conformed to by woman's compliant tenderness, whereby all the higher and better qualities of her nature are dwarfed and stunted; and so, the social ceremonies and iron shoes being cast aside, room be given for a free development of the entire being, and we may see in England a race of women intellectual, yet feminine; unrestrained by arbitrary law, yet moral; not pruriently virtuous, but translucently pure; not the humble second to man's high-sounding first, in the marriage duet, as she now is, but his co-equal sustainer and counsellor, and comforter and friend;—instead of a race of women, deformed and distorted by man's warping of manifest natural qualities, a woman perfected by the unrestrained consummation and completion of the germ-gifts of mind and morals implanted in her, for development, by the unerring finger of her Maker.

The Aristocracy of Wealth, viewed as a permanence, is unquestionably worse than the Aristocracy of Descent; and if, as fortunes multiply, their possessors are to continue to assume the tone and bearing of the aristocratic spirit, our fortune in that direction is worse than hopeless. But when there is a breaking up of iniquity, there is hope, even if the disjointed masses shape it of a deadlier form. The example of overthrow has been given. Wealth has bearded and defied Land and Descent; asserted its co-heirship to pride and insolence; and may not, therefore, a new and

holier spirit seize a new and healthier class, and this immoral Mammon worship be in its turn bearded, defied, and conquered? The very extent of its reign will hasten, if all go on well with us, the fall of the Mammon dynasty. For the taskmasters are in every town, on every hand. Not the smallest rural town but contains its half-dozen inflated money-peers, and its scores of high-hearted sensitive ones who are spurned and passed by, and who pant to grapple with the new aristocracy and to overthrow it. Out of its ruins, then, may arise at last something like the true aristocracy, the actual *best* of the people;—when neither the fact of being second-cousin to the Duke of Argyle, or illegitimate great-great-grandson to the merry monarch, or the possessor of unlimited scrip, or the owner of spinning-jennies, shall of itself raise a man to power and influence, unsupported by personal qualifications;—when, on the other hand, sterling manliness, high rectitude, enlarged capacity, shall find their proper position and have their proper reverence, even when disconnected with descent, and cash, and factories.

Our evil tendencies as regards association are merely errors of application. We have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone much that we should have done; we have applied it to the inner life of man, to his intellectual and religious nature, where it is death, and we have obstinately refused to apply it to the great aspect of his

outer life, his relations to man in the labour field. But the broad and determined tendency to association is an earnest that it will eventually reach the field where it is more particularly required; that it will confront Competition and annihilate it. Competition has been the one idea for long enough now. It has done mighty things in breaking up all bonds of loyalty between man and master; it has annihilated the kind and friendly relationship that once existed between master and servant; it has strengthened and nurtured all the wolfish, selfish qualities of our nature, and has dwarfed its more generous gifts and impulses, and it is quite time that it should perish. How a new state of labour laws would get organized—in what precise fashion, nothing but time and laborious experience will demonstrate. Neither Fourierism, nor Cabotism, nor Proudhonism, nor Socialism, nor Communism, nor Louis Blancism, are what is precisely wanted. I do not advocate these; but I do advocate that the inhuman principle of competition,—which says to the master, You shall huxter, and chaffer, and bid down human souls and bodies in the same manner and with the same spirit as you would stones and bricks; and to the work-people, You shall join in one huge, insane, inhuman scramble for work and wages; intent on self; careless and callous as to who starves, so that it be not you,—I do advocate, I say, that this should be done away with, and that a principle of help and good-feeling, loyalty, between man and man,

between servant and master, which association in some measure expresses, be introduced,—a principle which shall loftily say that the market price of labour, under and over-stocked labour markets, &c., are but sounding phrases that bear no deep moral investigation; useful only to gild selfishness, inhumanity, and fraud; phrases that do indeed correctly state the laws of human baseness applied to commerce, but which do not absolve any man from holier laws and obligations.

From literature great things are to be demanded, and great things may be hoped. In every town in England is there a knot of studious, truth-seeking men, who have earnestly held by their truth, but have as yet felt no call to speak it forth. These cannot long be silent. Sincere voices will become more and more abundant among the dissonances of the press; and many preachers will, ere long, be discharging their mission to society. Literature, therefore, may safely be trusted. It will act upon society, but be reacted upon by society to a greater degree. The earnest speakers in literature will produce their effect, if we are to live; and that effect being produced, healthier, sounder food will be demanded by society from its literary caterers. If the earnest speakers are not heard, are received in silence, or stoned, with execrations, as were the Prophets of old, woe is with us; and literature will have but to be the faithful

index of gradual decomposition, the registered bulletins of the social march to death.

But the chief thing on which our salvation hangs is a religious revival. Nothing but what is known by the cant term of a sect as a revival can save and preserve this country. We are destitute of the spirit of religion—of a high, impulsive, faithful service of the Living God, before all the trumperies of etiquette or politics, we have no large idea; we call ourselves Christians, and are machines and atheists. The heart is dead within us, and no dexterity of political juggling, no cunningly-devised social plan, no resuscitated conventional morality, can avail to save, if it be put on from without as a prescription needed by our situation, and do not rise spontaneous from the devout beatings of an awakened piety, blossom forth from the rekindled religion of the people at large. Dogmas insisted on by society have trammelled and fettered the spirit of the people: the secrets of the universe have become closed, and all devout wonder having ceased, a barren fable has become the mythology of the higher classes, empty genuflexions and prayer-grinding their practice; and the lower classes, sickened with cant, disgusted by the spectacle of bigoted doctrinal intolerance and wholesale scorn of practical well-doing, have discarded, for the most part, religious systems with contempt to practise a rough Christianity of their own. This

death may well be another glorious transition of the religious elements of the world. Europe and England were as dead as we are when Martin Luther rose and created a Revival, and sent a fervent, pious blood surging through the veins of an awakened world. And now the blood has once more grown stagnated and corrupt, and we have need of a new infusion if we are not to perish. But an infusion of what kind? Is it to be a return to the peculiar revival of Luther that is to save us? Is it to be a phantom of Anglo-Catholic belief and practice, appearing in the form of Puseyism? Is it to be in an Evangelical Union, revivifying with deeper intolerance the Puritan faith? Is it to be the "ghost of a defunct Socinianism?" Neither of these, nor all; we are to march forward, and not to retrograde. Religion is no more stationary than are Politics. There is no finality in the world. The time is coming for an emancipation of the soul of man from the dominance of dogmas. The time is coming when doctrinal sectarianism must perish. We want good men. That is the end of all religion; the salvation of a nation and of the world. We do not want good men of any particular mould: good Churchmen, good Calvinists, good Catholics, good Methodists, good Unitarians, are not valuable for their distinctive names, but for the one small name they have in common. We want men of intense piety of soul, so that no sham of Church or State can impose upon them; men who, with

their whole souls, will worship the God their consciences teach them to believe—will do His will in the face of all obstacles, and stand erect upon the earth as brave-hearted, generous, balanced men. And we want that the national religious feeling shall freely allow all this, without legal or social obloquy. Let the human soul have free scope. God made it; God leads it; God's are its dicta; unto Him shall they alway tend. But that in this latter century, when the human intellect has cast off all the fetters of mechanical and physical sciences, and has made large strides in metaphysical and mental knowledge, the human soul should be bound down absolutely by dogmas, useless in themselves, and not to be established by argument, is an anomaly which cannot last with good result to individuals or to the nation. Your truth is not my truth, neither is my truth his truth; and yet do all these truths to one of us appear to be from God. How then? Shall the strongest of the three put his feet upon the necks of the other twain; or shall the two whose truths resemble each other the most, conspire that they may groan down and extinguish the unfortunate third? Not so: and yet that is the present practice. The fires of Smithfield are no more; thumb-screws and racks have been put down; and yet does society ever employ the non-physical racks and thumb-screws it knows too well how to use, to drive into obloquy and silence the brave-



hearted man who shall boldly state that his truth is not their truth, although his *acted* life be one elaborate carrying out of the very principles their truth inculcates, and which they, the thumb-screw users, wholesalely neglect. There was a time when this was done from intensity of religious feeling—when the active life agreed with the professed truth. Then was persecution of a healthy complexion. Now we have the persecution from social regulation rather than belief; and the acted belief is not required. We have let the good fall and have retained the bad. Our only hope, then, is for a revival of that ancient piety, and an annihilation of the present narrowness and persecution. Nothing but a revived national piety, a newly-enkindled reverence for the mighty mysteries of matter and spirit round about us, a newly-awakened esteem for, and loyalty towards, goodness, valour, and sincerity in man, can put new strength into the social frame. But it must be a piety without intolerance; intense, sincere, demanding worthy action as a test of sincerity, and yet leaving free to its sublime musings and God-sent conclusions the illimitable soul of man.

My task is well-nigh ended. Such signs as appeared to be clearly perilous I have clearly and fearlessly exposed; what from my heart I believe to be their remedies, what the future of England may be, and what it should be, I have also plainly stated. If I shall have succeeded in calling attention to these matters, in getting it acknowledged

that there is danger to be avoided, or even in showing that there is danger in allowing social matters to drift on whithersoever the world, the flesh, and the devil may blow them, my object will be attained. That the great conventional-world should be induced to leave its abominations, and come out of its fashionable Babylon into a sounder life and a purer atmosphere by my preaching, or by that of any man, or number of men, I did not, and do not anticipate. That here and there may be found a genuine heart that shall have sympathy with these views, and whom these pages may interest, and, it may be, console and strengthen for battle with the social Hydra, I did and do desire and anticipate. From the reformation and revival of the influential portion of the Middle Class there is nothing to hope. Systematic drunkards at fifty rarely reform, and if they do, cannot succeed in averting the death induced by previous excess. Neither do classes of men long sunken in effeminacies and putrescences often cast them on one side and rise, in pristine strength, superior to them. The hope for England is in the less influential portion of that class, and in the rough honesty and untutored sagacity of the neglected but active and energetic Working Class. In them is there manliness, honesty, sincerity, and a dogged hatred of all quackery and cant. To them, broad fundamental truths never are spoken in vain: to them, neither prejudice nor intolerance can look for sympathy and support. They are like the soil

of America, teeming with riches and genuine fertility, but wanting the plough and the axe. They are unlettered, uneducated for the most part; but education and cultivation is their most fervent desire. It is impossible that the real marrow and sinew that is in these classes can long remain in its present subjection to the decadent and debilitated class above them. They will assert their social and political rights; assert them and attain them. Whether it be for good or for evil, the march of England will be directly towards complete democracy. And if when that comes these rough untutored men are left uninstructed as to the shoals and rocks upon which their predecessors have split, are left uninformed as to what is to come after democracy, what democracy is to do, democracy will mean ruin, confusion, and death. Whether we will, or whether we will not, we cannot avert this impending on-rushing of democracy. It is the destiny of this country to try it utterly; to take it up, mould it, make it a form and a fact, or to perish in the attempt. All hands in England are wanted at this hour. There is neither time for rest nor for pleasure. Whosoever has the power to think, to speak, and to write, should now be thinking, speaking, and writing. Whosoever can stand up before the shams and conventionalities of life, and proclaim their hollowness and falsity—can come out of them and have no part nor parcel with them—should now assert his manhood, and do his meed honestly and faithfully for the

redemption of society and the salvation of the land. Above all, whosoever can utterly turn his back upon the rottennesses of fashionable existence, and use his example, his intellect, his influence, for the instruction and cultivation of the seething and restless working class, should know that upon the training and fashioning of that class depends the future of his country. For as the stars, and moons, and worlds, and galaxies, spin in their orbits unceasing; as the mountains burn and the earth opens according to inevitable laws, though never so many Pompeiis be entombed and Lisbons rent asunder; so the great onward flow of men and people surges on continuous, and will not stay a moment for this nation nor for that. Russia, with its undeveloped thousands, when the serf shall become free, and the iron energy of the Autocrat be exercised over *men* who obey him, and no longer over machines who have no choice—with its strong uncorrupted bodies, and strong undebilitated minds, Russia will perform its mission in the world, and will not pause if its course be over the body of over-populated, over-refined, over-bequacked, illustrious, but expended Britain. America, that greater Russia of the new hemisphere, our first-born—the time will come when all the marrow and sap that has been incessantly sucked out of England to give bones, and thews, and blood to that vigorous American frame will be our rival and antagonist at all hands; when America will address the Eastern Hemisphere from the platform

of the West, and speak back in Mississippi and Niagara eloquence to Europe and to us. In such a time America will achieve its destiny, though it be over the grovelling body of its parent.

What then remains for England and for Englishmen? To stand by the Truth and have faith in God. If anything can continue the British power, if anything can reform society and maintain our glory untarnished, it will be by the bulk of the people discarding plausibilities and lies, and dwelling in and acting on the living truth. Nor can the humblest true life be enacted without its influence on the destinies of the world. A true man cannot walk the streets but a divine influence emanates from him. God would have spared Sodom had there been ten true men within it. Then let no one high-striving, struggling soul, though spurned and cast aside and baffled, say that his influence can be wholly lost. It cannot, it shall not be. And though it were so, my mission and yours is to be true, though the whole universe rung falsely.

And for the rest, though England were to perish, God will not abandon his creation; his decrees will not cease to guide it. Over the ruins of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, Italy, Carthage, England, sweeps on the mighty tide of human empire; performing the moral decrees of God, as nature fulfils his physical ordinances, until, the spherul music being ended, the march shall cease, and the finished and expended worlds shall be

drawn up once more before the throne of Him whose fiats they have fulfilled.

In that day the offering they shall all present to the Eternal shall be the true thoughts and the true actions of the true hearts who lived and perished on them.

THE END.



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